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AUTHOR Berry, Margaret C.; And Others
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ABSTRACT

In an effort to evaluate the undergraduate pass-fail option system of grading at the University of Texas at Austin, 869 undergraduate students, 269 faculty members, and 35 administrators participated in a questionnaire survey. Results indicated: (1) During the 1973 fall semester, 3,896 undergraduate course registrations out of a total of 155,133 were recorded for courses being taken on a pass-fail option basis. (2) From an examination of the incidence of registrations on a pass-fail option basis within colleges and schools, it is clear that a wide variance in practice exists. Optional pass-fail enrollment in the schools of the university ranged from a high of 166 in the School of Communications to a low of 30 in the School of Architecture. On an absolute basis, the number of enrollments within a college ranged from over 1,000 in the College of Social and Behavioral Sciences to less than 50 in the College of Engineering and the College of Pharmacy. (3) Students who selected a pass-fail option course were somewhat different from the ABCDF students. With respect to indexes of academic potential and performance, a small but consistent superiority was noted in favor of the pass-fail students. Additional results are included. (MJM)

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AN EVALUATION OF THE UNDERGRADUATE PASS-FAIL OPTION SYSTEM OF GRADING AT THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT AUSTIN

Margaret C. Berry
Victor H. Appel
Paul G. Liberty, Jr.
H. Paul Kelley

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PREFACE

Early in the 1973 Fall Semester, a team of investigators, including Drs. Victor H. Appel, Paul G. Liberty, H. Paul Kelley, Margaret C. Berry, and student research assistants, was assembled in response to President Stephen H. Spurr's request that a study be conducted of student, faculty and administrator practices, experiences and attitudes toward the undergraduate pass-fail option system of grading at The University of Texas at Austin. The study was intended to provide needed data that would serve to aid various University decision-makers considering possible revisions in the system. This report is intended to summarize the most salient results of that investigation.

The investigators acknowledge with gratitude the contribution of Don Marler, Pat Chew, Sandra Bruce, Carlos Laredo, and Walter Johnston all of whom served as research assistants. In addition, we are appreciative of Alan Beychok, Alan Gerger, and other members of the Student Government Committee on Academic Affairs who gave helpful commentary on the questionnaire and other aspects of the study. Finally, we express appreciation to the dedicated and painstaking clerical services of Terry Hall and Lynn Davis.

V. H. A.
P. G. L.
H. P. K.
M. C. B.

May, 1974

BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

As a necessary background for the study, this section specifies the current policies about the optional pass-fail grading system at U. T. Austin as stated in the enabling legislation. In addition, subsequent implementation and proposed revisions of the system are outlined.

Enabling Legislation and Its Implementation

In a memorandum dated October 20, 1967, to members of the Educational Policy Committee, then Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs Norman Hackerman asked the Committee to consider making a recommendation to the Faculty Council for a University-wide policy concerning "the use of pass-fail grades within clearly defined limits."*[1]

On November 13, 1967, the Educational Policy Committee, with Professor W. T. Tucker as chairman, submitted for consideration by the Faculty Council a set of recommendations concerning an optional pass-fail grading system.[2] Those proposals would have permitted all U. T. Austin students to take a limited number of traditionally graded courses on a pass-fail basis. On December 12, 1967, the Faculty of the College of Arts and Sciences submitted to the Council a similar set of proposals.[3]

At its meeting on December 12, 1967, the Faculty Council used the Educational Policy Committee proposals as the vehicle for its recommendations to the Administration and the Board of Regents. The original proposals were modified and augmented by the Council, which then approved them in the following form:

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*Footnotes for "Background of the Study" are listed on page 52.

a. Undergraduate students shall be permitted to take up to five semester courses in elective subjects outside their major on a Pass or Fail basis as a part of the hours required for their degree. They must state their intentions to register on this basis by the official date for adding courses and changing sections; they must have received thirty semester hours of college credit and may not elect more than two courses a semester on the Pass-Fail basis.

b. If a student decides to major in the subject in which he had taken a course on the Pass-Fail basis, the department concerned shall decide whether the course may be counted as part of the student's major requirements.

c. The grade point average for a student who has elected to take courses on the Pass-Fail basis will be calculated by dividing the total grade points he has received by the number of credit hours he has taken on the letter-grade basis.

d. Each department is authorized to offer as many as two undergraduate courses on a Pass-Fail basis, and a student may take as many as two such courses within his major.

e. Undergraduate students may take examinations for advanced standing on a Pass-Fail basis, but advanced standing based on such examinations shall not reduce by the corresponding amount courses which may be taken on a Pass-Fail basis.[4]

At its meeting on January 26, 1968, the Board of Regents of The University of Texas System approved the recommendations from the U. T. Austin Faculty Council.[5] The optional pass-fail grading system was to become effective on September 1, 1968.

On January 10, 1968, President Norman Hackerman appointed a special committee to implement the optional pass-fail grading system. Professor Tucker, chairman of the special committee, made a report to President Hackerman on February 19, 1968.[6] The special committee recommended that the symbol CR, meaning "credit but without specific grade," should be used to indicate a passing grade in a course taken on a pass-fail option basis. It recommended further that when a student registers for a course, he should indicate on his registration form that he wishes to take it on a pass-fail basis. When he draws a class card for that course, he should have it punched with a symbol that will appear on both the instructor's check sheet and the instructor's grade report form. Students should be permitted to request a change from pass-fail to ABCDF grading, or the reverse, in a course during the add-drop period. Details regarding the use of forms were included in the recommendations. The final recommendation was that grades should be reported by instructors as CR or F, and that these grades be subject to change only to CR or F.

President Hackerman approved the report and made a brief statement about it at the March 18, 1968, meeting of the Faculty Council.[7] The recommendations were revised slightly to provide for identification of the course as a free elective or as one within the student's major area.

Recent Deliberations Regarding Possible Revision of the Present System

Within the past two years, substantial debate has focused upon the possibility of revising or even eliminating the pass-fail option system. This debate was initiated by a proposal for revisions of the pass-fail grading system that the Coordinating Council for Arts and Sciences sent to the University Council on January 20, 1972.[8] The proposal was considered by the Council at its February 21, 1972, meeting; after discussion, the proposal was unanimously referred to the Committee on Educational

Policy.[9] That Committee reported back to the University Council at its meeting of May 15, 1972, but the Committee's proposed revisions were deferred by the Council for further discussion "until fall."[10] In the interim, the report was referred again to the Educational Policy Committee.[11]

On February 8, 1973, Professor Bernard P. Sagik, then chairman of the Educational Policy Committee, sent to President Spurr and the University Council for consideration at its March 19 meeting a modification of the Committee's earlier proposed revisions of the pass-fail grading system.[12] Dr. Sagik commented that the Committee sensed that the avowed purpose of the pass-fail option--to explore academically without undue jeopardy to one's GPA--often had not been realized. The Committee urged that the multiple GPA be considered seriously. It further proposed that, if the pass-fail grading system were to be retained, it should be governed by the rules which the Committee was recommending. Those rules would expand optional pass-fail grading to required courses outside the student's major and would permit the student more flexibility in changing from ABCDF grading to pass-fail grading.

Prior to the March 19 meeting of the University Council, the Educational Policy Committee's modified recommendations were studied by the Subcommittee of the Deans Council, which consists of academic assistant deans. Through Dean Max Westbrook, its chairman at the time, the Subcommittee recommended on March 12 that a new set of revisions of the pass-fail grading system be substituted for the set proposed by the Educational Policy Committee.[13] Except for minor adjustments in procedures by which students could change to or from pass-fail grading, the Subcommittee recommended retention of the present pass-fail regulations.

At its March 19, 1973, meeting members of the University Council again discussed at great length the various pass-fail proposals.[14] Dr. Sagik presented the modified recommendations of the Educational Policy Committee. Dr. Westbrook distributed copies of his March 12 memorandum and presented the counter-recommendations from the Subcommittee of the Deans Council; in making his presentation Dr. Westbrook stated that his group felt it would be a mistake to expand a system "which has failed" in optional courses into the required courses. The Council finally voted to refer both sets of proposals back to the Educational Policy Committee, with the intent that the EPC and the Deans Council Subcommittee meet jointly and attempt to prepare a set of proposals both groups could support.

The two committees carried out the Council's mandate promptly; their joint recommendations were distributed to members of the University Council on April 13. The proposals from the two included the recommendation that the present optional pass-fail grading system be discontinued.[15] Dr. Sagik presented these proposals to the University Council for action on April 16, 1973. After lengthy, and often impassioned, discussion, members of the University Council voted to table the recommendations, thus leaving in effect the present optional pass-fail grading system regulations.[16] Later in the same meeting, President Stephen H. Spurr indicated that he would refer the question back once again to the Educational Policy Committee.[17]

Inasmuch as the discrepant positions taken utilized differing assumptions about the status of pass-fail students and their motives, the need was evident for reliable data to provide empirical bases for decision-making. To obtain the needed empirical data, President Spurr first took steps to obtain a review of the professional literature on pass-fail grading.[18] Then he asked that a proposal be written for a "study of practices, experiences, and attitudes toward pass-fail from students and faculty on our campus."[19]

On August 3, 1973, a proposal for the study being reported here was submitted by the investigators to President Spurr via Dr. Ronald M. Brown, Vice President for Student Affairs.[20] The proposal was approved, and work began on the study in September, 1973.

FOCI OF THE STUDY

After discussion with certain key personnel, a review of recent deliberations in University legislative bodies, and perusal of relevant literature, the following questions were identified and made to serve as foci of the study:

1. What was the incidence of student enrollment in courses on a pass-fail option basis at U. T. Austin during the 1973 Fall Semester?

2. Do certain colleges or schools have a larger proportionate enrollment than do others of students taking their courses on a pass-fail option basis?

3. What are the demographic characteristics of students currently taking courses on a pass-fail option basis? Specifically, what do indices of academic potential and performance, classification level, sex, college of origin, and post-baccalaureate educational plans reveal about the modal characteristics of a sample of students taking courses on a pass-fail option basis?

4. What are the beliefs held by students, faculty, and administrators about the modal characteristics of students who take courses on a pass-fail option basis?

5. What are the beliefs of students, faculty, and administrators about the academic orientation and commitment to learning held by undergraduate students at U. T. Austin?

6. What are the principal reasons reported by students for their taking courses on a pass-fail basis?

7. What is the degree of reported satisfaction by students with the pass-fail courses they have taken?

8. What are the primary reasons faculty and administrators impute to students as the bases for taking pass-fail courses, and how "legitimate" do they consider these reasons to be?

9. Do students who are taking courses on a pass-fail option basis receive higher or lower grades on the average than do their classmates enrolled in the same classes on an ABCDF basis?

10. Do students who are enrolled in courses on a pass-fail option basis report higher levels of satisfaction with those courses than do their classmates who are taking the same courses on an ABCDF basis?

11. What attitudes do students, faculty, and administrators hold toward specified hypothetical changes in the pass-fail grading system?

12. How knowledgeable are students, faculty, and administrators about the present pass-fail option system of grading?

13. What are the types and extent of perceived administrative problems arising for both administrators and faculty in conjunction with the implementation of the pass-fail option grading system?

14. What has been the experience of administrators in implementing the pass-fail option system?

15. In practice, what is the degree of administrator adherence to the university and college rules specifying conditions for participation in courses on a pass-fail option basis?

METHOD

Overview

The nature of the research required access to a large number of students, faculty, and administrators in a relatively short time. Further, extensive information was needed from each respondent. Such circumstances suggested the use of a questionnaire methodology. To obtain data on the particular issues on which this study focused, it was necessary to tailor-make the questionnaire instruments. In an effort to maximize the responses from the carefully selected samples, administration of the questionnaires was accomplished during class periods and in other group meetings whenever possible. Faculty and administrator members of the selected samples who could not be reached in groups were mailed questionnaires on an individual basis.

The sections below describe in detail the composition of the student, faculty and administrator samples selected; the procedure for selecting those samples; the procedure followed in conducting the study; the nature of the three questionnaire instruments developed; and the nature of the analyses performed on the data.

Student Subjects

The student subjects in the study were 869 undergraduate students enrolled in 27 classes throughout the University during the 1973 Fall Semester. These were classes admitting students on both a pass-fail and on an ABCDF basis. Of the 869 students, 195 were students taking the classes on a pass-fail option basis; the remaining 674 students were taking the classes on the traditionally graded basis. Of the 869 students, 403 had taken one or more pass-fail option courses at U. T. Austin, while 458 had taken none; no information about their enrollment in courses on the pass-fail option basis was received from eight of the subjects. This procedure for the selection of student subjects permitted comparison of these two subgroups. A detailed description of the characteristics of the student subjects is provided in Tables 1a and 1b.

Procedure for Selection of Student Subjects and for Administration of the Student Questionnaire

The procedure for selection of the student subjects was directly related to the procedure for the selection of the 27 classes chosen for this study. The investigators started with an intent to draw a 2.5% sample representative of the various colleges and schools at U. T. Austin (825). The procedure followed was to examine the Registrar's listing of 1973 Fall Semester classes that had both pass-fail and ABCDF student enrollments. The investigators then identified those classes that had the highest proportions of students enrolled under the pass-fail option. A constraint placed on this selection procedure was that each of the colleges and schools had to be represented; hence, some classes having lower proportions of pass-fail registrants were selected over other classes having higher proportions.

The professor teaching each selected class was asked to permit the questionnaire to be administered to the members of that class during a regular class meeting time on a convenient date subsequent to the first mid-term examination. One professor declined, so an alternate class was selected and used. The 27 classes ultimately included in the study are listed in Table 2b.

The student questionnaire was administered in the classes selected at the agreed upon time by project personnel. Students were invited to participate, but their participation was not obligatory. Almost all class members agreed to participate. No effort was made to follow-up on students who were absent from class on the day the questionnaire was administered.

Faculty Subjects

The faculty subjects in this study were 269 members of the faculty at U. T. Austin in 1973-1974. The characteristics of this faculty sample are specified in Table 3. As can be noted from a study of that table, a wide range of faculty were represented in the sample.

Procedure for Selection of Faculty Sample and for Administration of the Faculty Questionnaire

The faculty sample (N = 269) was drawn from three discrete sources: instructors of the 27 classes in which the student respondents were registered; 53 members of the Faculty Senate; and a representative sample based on a mail-out of the questionnaire to every fifth-listed faculty member on an official alphabetical listing of the University faculty.

The 27 faculty members teaching the classes polled were asked to respond to the faculty questionnaire at the same time that their students completed the student questionnaire. All complied with that request.

The chairman of the Faculty Senate, Professor W. S. Livingston, was asked for his consent to permit the administration of the faculty questionnaire to Faculty Senate members present at a regular meeting. Arrangements were made to include the questionnaire on the agenda for the Faculty Senate meeting in December 1973. Copies of the questionnaire were mailed to those members who were absent from the meeting with a request that they be returned in an envelope addressed to the project staff. This subgroup was sampled in an effort to include in the faculty sample the views of the faculty who were particularly conversant with the pass-fail issue. Forty-six respondents (out of a possible 53) were obtained thereby.

By far the largest proportion of faculty respondents accrued from the mail-out of the faculty questionnaire to approximately 400 faculty members. The mail-out was accompanied by a cover letter of explanation from the chairman of the Faculty Senate. The respondents were requested to return the questionnaire in an envelope addressed to the project staff. As indicated above, this faculty subsample was comprised of respondents to a mail-out to every fifth named faculty member on an alphabetized roster of the 1973-1974 faculty members at U. T. Austin. This mail-out yielded a 49% return (196). No follow-up could be conducted in that the respondents answered anonymously.

Administrator Subjects

The administrator subjects were 35 respondents from among all vice presidents, deans, assistant deans, and certain other administrative officers at U. T. Austin who responded to an invitation to participate in the study. The characteristics of the administrator sample are specified in Table 3.

Procedure for Selection of Administrator Sample and for Administration of the Administrator Questionnaire

The administrator questionnaire was administered in several ways: It was mailed to the vice presidents and deans with a cover letter of explanation by Dr. Ronald M. Brown, Vice President for Student Affairs. The remaining administrator respondents were members of the Subcommittee of the Deans Council, a group composed primarily of assistant deans or persons serving in that capacity and certain other administrative officers. After gaining the necessary consent from the Subcommittee chairman, the questionnaire was administered at the regular November meeting of the Subcommittee. Members absent from that meeting were mailed the questionnaire individually. In all, 35 (76%) of the 46 administrators receiving the questionnaire responded to it.

Instruments

The pass-fail questionnaires were specifically prepared for this study by the investigators after perusal of similar instruments available in the professional literature and after various efforts to learn the salient issues. These efforts included a review of the literature, a reading of the minutes of University bodies debating the pass-fail question, and conferences with ten individuals having special expertise or involvement with the issue. In addition, the investigators invited and received input regarding the content of the questionnaire from members of the Student Government Committee on Academic Affairs and the Texas Union Student Academic Affairs Committee. These student leaders served as preliminary field testers of the student questionnaire and offered suggestions for its revision. After a number of revisions and field testing, the research team finalized the student questionnaire. The faculty and administrator questionnaires were adaptations of the student questionnaire in that these latter two instruments retained many of the same items found in the student questionnaire. Additional items were added or deleted as appropriate for the target group.

Data Analysis

The results of the completed questionnaires were coded and prepared for data processing. Using DISTAT (Veldman, 1971), distribution statistics for each item on the three questionnaires were compiled. In addition to the summary data for the three basic samples, subgroup analyses were performed on the student data in order to make possible essential comparisons between pass-fail students and ABCDF students. Pass-fail students were defined as those students in 27 representative classes who had taken, or were taking, at least one course on a pass-fail basis at U. T. Austin. In several instances, the sample was further divided to permit comparisons of the pass-fail students enrolled in the 27 representative classes with their traditionally graded counterparts in those same classes.

Because of missing data or noncodable responses to certain items on the questionnaires, the number of respondents varied somewhat from item to item. These differences are indicated in the tables as appropriate.

RESULTS

The results of the study will be reported within the framework of the basic questions posed. Following the restatement of each basic question, major findings are reported.

1. *What was the incidence of student enrollment in courses on a pass-fail option basis at U. T. Austin during the 1973 Fall Semester?*

During the 1973 Fall Semester, 3,896 undergraduate course registrations out of a total of 155,133 (2.51%) were recorded for courses being taken on a pass-fail option basis at U. T. Austin. A breakdown of the number of registrations within each of the colleges and schools is given in Table 4. Without extensive effort, it was not possible to ascertain the number of individual students involved. If data from the student sample can be considered representative, then it is probable that the preponderance of these registrations are accounted for by students taking only a single course, or about 3,500 individuals.

A second way to describe the incidence of student enrollment in courses on a pass-fail option basis is to determine how many courses, on the average, individual students have taken at U. T. Austin. These data were based on the report of the 403 subjects in the student sample who had pass-fail experience at U. T. Austin. The mean number of courses taken by this predominantly upper-division subsample was 1.89. Only 7% of these students had taken more than three pass-fail courses on a pass-fail option basis. When all 869 students in the sample are considered, the mean number of pass-fail courses taken falls to .89.

2. Do certain colleges or schools have a larger proportionate enrollment than do others of students taking their courses on a pass-fail option basis?

From an examination of the incidence of registrations on a pass-fail option basis within colleges and schools, as shown in Table 4, it is clear that a wide variance in practice exists.[1] This statement applies on both an absolute and a relative basis. On an absolute basis, the number of enrollments within a college ranged from over 1,000 in the College of Social and Behavioral Sciences to less than 50 in the College of Engineering and the College of Pharmacy. Optional pass-fail enrollment in the schools of the University ranged from a high of 166 in the School of Communications to a low of 30 in the School of Architecture.

Since the colleges (or division) and schools in the University vary widely in size, a comparison of the relative number of pass-fail registrations out of the total number of registrations for all courses in each college or school was necessary. Viewed in this manner, a wide variation in practice is also found. The relative number of optional pass-fail registrations ranged from more than 4% in Education and General and Comparative Studies to less than 1% in the Colleges of Pharmacy and Engineering. Compatable data for schools revealed a high of 6.53 for the System-Wide School of Nursing to 1.06% as a low for the School of Architecture. In summary, these data from all colleges, divisions, and schools reveal that optional pass-fail registrations remain a very small proportion of total undergraduate course registration.

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[1] These figures do not include pass-fail enrollment in courses offered on a pass-fail basis only.

3. What are the demographic characteristics of students currently taking courses on a pass-fail option basis? Specifically, what do indices of academic potential and performance, classification level, sex, college of origin, and post-baccalaureate educational plans reveal about the modal characteristics of a sample of students taking courses on a pass-fail option basis?

The characteristics of students who had taken one or more pass-fail courses at U.T. Austin were studied to determine whether or not such students were atypical relative to students at large. A number of demographic characteristics served as the parameters for evaluation. The data obtained with respect to these parameters are shown in Tables 1a and 1b. Overall, the results suggest that the students who selected a pass-fail option course were somewhat different from ABCDF students. With respect to indices of academic potential and performance, a small but consistent superiority was noted in favor of the pass-fail students. Forty-six percent of the pass-fail students were in the upper 10% of their high school classes as opposed to 40% of the ABCDF students. Mean Verbal and Mathematical Scholastic Aptitude Test subscores were somewhat higher for the pass-fail students, as were the several grade point average indices. A greater likelihood existed that the pass-fail student was a senior student than any other classification level and that he entered the University directly from high school (as opposed to being a transfer student). Only 38% of the pass-fail students were transfers, as compared to 44% who were transfer students among the comparison group of ABCDF students. In addition, the pass-fail students were somewhat more likely to be planning for graduate study (43%) than were the students in the comparison group (37%). A slight difference was noted in the degree of certitude held by the pass-fail students concerning future career plans. The pass-fail group was slightly less certain about their future career plans than were the ABCDF students. Finally, the pass-fail student was much more likely to be a student majoring in the social and behavioral sciences or business administration than in engineering, fine arts or pharmacy.

4. What are the beliefs held by students, faculty, and administrators about the modal characteristics of students who take courses on a pass-fail option basis?

Question #4 was investigated in two ways. First, all three samples were asked to indicate their beliefs about the academic abilities of those students who take courses on the pass-fail option basis at U. T. Austin--that is, are such students drawn from the upper or lower strata of ability among undergraduates? These data are shown in Tables 5 and 6.

The modal response (51%) of the total student sample as to which students take advantage of the pass-fail option indicates that students are probably equally distributed across the total range of ability among students. This belief was even more pronounced among the pass-fail students (58%) than among the ABCDF students (45%).

A secondary trend was noticeable. Almost one-fourth of the students thought the optional pass-fail registrations attracted about an equal number of students from both extremes of ability (but not from the middle).

The comparable data for the faculty and administrators generally parallel the student data with respect to the modal beliefs. The secondary trend reflected in the student data also applied to the faculty data, but not to the administrator data. Administrators perceived that more poorer students (18%) took the pass-fail option than did the faculty (5%) and student (4%) groups.

The second means of investigating the question was by inquiring into the attitudes and motives of students who elect courses on a pass-fail basis. Faculty and administrators were asked to give their impressions about such matters as, "Do students work harder or less hard than they usually do when taking a course on a pass-fail option basis?" These data are presented in Tables 7 and 8.

The greatest amount of concurrence among faculty (71%) and administrators (77%) was that students are less anxious about such courses than they are when graded on an ABCDF basis. In addition, a majority of faculty (52%) and administrators (74%) believed that students taking courses on a pass-fail option basis work less hard than they usually do in ABCDF graded courses. A majority of the administrators (57%) but only about one-fourth (27%) of the faculty felt that such students get less out of courses taken on a pass-fail option basis than they usually do otherwise. About one-third of both groups concurred that the students would probably not have taken the courses in which they were enrolled on a pass-fail option basis had those courses been available only on an ABCDF graded basis.

It is of interest to compare these impressionistic beliefs with the parallel data reported by students regarding their own actual pass-fail experience, as shown in Table 9. A majority of the students reported themselves as being less anxious (approximately 66%) while a minority responded that they worked less hard than they usually do (approximately 37%). On the other hand, about 20% indicated that they actually worked harder, and 39% reported that they got more out of the course than they usually do. About a third of the students reported that they would not have taken the course in which they were currently enrolled on a pass-fail option basis were it available only on an ABCDF basis. Slightly more than one-fourth of the students indicated that their pass-fail experience had caused them to want to take at least one additional course in the same academic discipline, but they had not yet done so.

These data suggest some concern by faculty and administrators about the academic diligence of pass-fail students. This concern is supported in part and opposed in part by the student data.

5. *What are the beliefs of students, faculty, and administrators about the academic orientation and commitment to learning held by undergraduate students at U. T. Austin?*

While question #5 does not serve directly to illumine the pass-fail student, it does contribute to an understanding of the context of the academic setting in which the pass-fail option is offered and the view held of undergraduate students within it.

On the basis of student responses, as shown in Table 10, it is apparent that both pass-fail and ABCDF graded students have diverse views of the importance or necessity for grades. Strong concurrence is evident, however, that grades do not reflect how much undergraduate students get out of a course, yet somewhat paradoxically, students tend to agree that students in general are more likely to be concerned about the grade they receive than about the subject matter of the course. This latter result is consistent with the indication that most undergraduate students are not likely to be interested in "learning for learning's sake." The data tend to suggest a view of traditional grading as being a noxious but necessary academic trapping.

Faculty responses relative to grades and grading are more clear-cut, as shown in Table 11, than are the student data. Faculty respondents tended to support even more strongly than students the necessity for grades (e.g., "Grades are needed to let undergraduates know where they stand. . . ."). The faculty data also parallel student indications that student motivation to learn is less than optimal. For example, the faculty's strongest concurrence was agreement with the statement, "Most undergraduate students need the incentive of grades to motivate them to work." This latter statement yielded a mean rating of 5.23 on the seven-point scale. The faculty members tend to support grades as being essential or at least functional for the somewhat nonacademic orientation they perceive to characterize a large segment of U. T. Austin undergraduates. Grades are also functional in the sense that they are required in the culture for purposes of graduate school and job placement.

As shown in Table 12, U. T. Austin administrators' views are generally consistent with those of U. T. Austin faculty. Both faculty and administrators' ratings, though not as highly supportive as student ratings, concur in recognizing the limitations existing in grading systems. For example, faculty and administrators show mild concurrence with the assertion, "Grades do not reflect how much undergraduates get out of a course" (4.46 and 4.37, respectively, on the seven-point scale used). Nevertheless, it is clear from both faculty and administrator ratings that there is strong support for the continuation of grading systems at the University, despite their acknowledged limitations. On other questions asked relative to student academic orientations, there was appreciably more diversity of views by both faculty and administrators.

6. What are the principal reasons reported by students for their taking courses on a pass-fail basis?

In reviewing the deliberations regarding possible revisions in the pass-fail option system, it was clear that the motivations of students in taking pass-fail courses was a central consideration. Were students seeking an easy way out in signing up for courses on a pass-fail basis, or were they seeking a legitimate means of exploring new fields without the risk of damaging their academic records? Were other motives primary? In an effort to provide an empirical basis for answering this question, students were asked directly about their motives in signing up for courses on a pass-fail basis. The results obtained are shown in Table 13.

The data reveal that the primary motives reported by students taking courses on a pass-fail basis are to lighten their academic loads (76%) and to reduce the "threat value" of letter grades while taking the courses (items #2, #3, and #4). Secondarily, students felt the pass-fail option served as a vehicle for academic exploration in a minor or interest area (51%). It is of interest to note that pass-fail courses were seen by only 21% of the students as a viable vehicle in helping them to select a major.

As responses to this question were based on a pre-selected listing of possible motives, the investigators were particularly interested in examining additional write-in responses volunteered by respondents. Relatively few write-in answers were obtained. No central theme emerged from these additional write-in responses.

7. What is the degree of reported satisfaction by students with the pass-fail courses they have taken?

Closely linked to question #6, which queried students' motives in taking courses on a pass-fail option basis, was the degree of satisfaction provided by those courses in accomplishing the students' intents. Using a seven-point scale in which "7" equalled "completely satisfied," students' ratings of their satisfactions were generally moderate. As can be seen by the data given in Table 13, virtually all of the listed purposes served by taking courses on a pass-fail option basis were rated between "5" and "6" on the seven-point scale. Students rated highest their satisfaction with courses which permitted them to explore outside of their major area (5.94) and which permitted them "To maximize my learning without having to worry about the grade" (5.87).

A single exception to the generally moderate ratings was noted with respect to the item, "To help me in selecting my major." The mean response was 3.71, though the variability of responses to this question was greater than for any other. This result is consistent with the students' low ratings in question #6 on the use of pass-fail courses to help them in choosing a major.

8. *What are the primary reasons faculty and administrators impute to students as the bases for taking pass-fail courses, and how "legitimate" do they consider these reasons to be?*

The investigators were interested in ascertaining the degree of congruence between the reasons reported by students for taking courses on a pass-fail basis with faculty and administrators' perceptions of those reasons. Faculty and administrators were therefore asked to rate the reasons they attributed to students for taking courses on a pass-fail basis from among the same listing of pre-selected alternatives as that responded to by the students. The results are shown in Tables 13, 14, 15, and 16.

As can be seen from the data shown in these tables, a moderate degree of concurrence existed between students and faculty as to what the reasons were for taking courses on a pass-fail option basis. Several exceptions existed. The item, "To minimize the risk of low grades in an unfamiliar area," was fourth most popular among students and rose to a rank of first in frequency of mention by faculty and a rank of second by administrators. In addition, "To maximize my learning without having to worry about the grade," was ranked second in frequency of mention by students and fell to a rank of fifth in frequency when rated by both faculty and administrators. Nevertheless, it can be concluded from the data that faculty and administrators are "reading" with relatively good accuracy the primary reasons students are taking courses on a pass-fail basis.

The investigators were concerned also with the value judgments faculty and administrators made regarding the "legitimacy" of the students' reasons for taking courses on a pass-fail option basis. As can be seen from an examination of Tables 13, 14, 15, and 16, a close correlation did not exist between the most frequent reasons given by students for taking courses on a pass-fail option basis and the rationales most frequently judged as "legitimate" for students' doing so. The faculty and the administrators were in close accord in the value judgments they made. For example, both faculty and administrators were reluctant to endorse "lightening of a student's load," the most frequently reported item, as a "legitimate" rationale. With respect to legitimacy, this item was ranked eighth by faculty and seventh by administrators among the ten items listed (Table 16). In contrast, the item most frequently considered "legitimate" by both faculty and administrators was ranked only fifth in frequency by the students. This item dealt with "taking courses outside one's major area for exploratory purposes." It is evident from these data that academic exploration, a primary intent for establishing the pass-fail option system at U. T. Austin, is only a secondary motivation for students.

Two items highly ranked by students with respect to frequency were also endorsed by faculty and administrators in terms of "legitimacy." These two items (items #2 and #4) dealt with "maximizing learning without having to worry about grades' and "minimizing risk of low grades in an unfamiliar area." It would appear as if faculty and administrators value the pass-fail option as a way for encouraging academic exploration as long as the pursuit of new knowledge remains a rigorous and disciplined effort and not a shortcut.

The listings given in Table 16 provide an opportunity to compare rank orderings of the data across the three samples. These data indicate that the rank order preferences of faculty and administrators are more nearly similar than are those of either of the two groups when compared with the rankings of students.

In order to test the premise that students sometimes may be signing up for courses on a pass-fail option basis in order to enable them to attend classes with less regularity than might be required otherwise, the investigators asked faculty and administrators for their impressions about class attendance of pass-fail and ABCDF graded students. As the data in Table 17 indicate, faculty members tended to disagree or to be uncertain (3.89) that pass-fail students were any more likely to be absent from class than ABCDF graded students. Administrators, however, believed (4.82) that pass-fail students were likely to be less faithful in class attendance. Although the faculty data do not provide particularly clear-cut evidence, the administrators clearly hold the belief that pass-fail registrations result in reduced class attendance. Resolution of this issue must await actual attendance figures.

9. Do students who are taking courses on a pass-fail option basis receive higher or lower grades on the average than do their classmates enrolled in the same classes on an ABCDF basis?

A question of critical importance both on the campus and in the research literature deals with the actual academic performance of students taking courses on a pass-fail basis, as compared to that of traditionally graded students. Subjects in the study were asked to report their current grade averages in the course at the time the student questionnaire was administered. These data made possible a direct comparison of the performance of students enrolled on a pass-fail basis in 27 selected courses with that of counterpart ABCDF graded students. Table 18 shows the results of this analysis.

When the two subgroups were compared, no appreciable difference was noted in the mean student reported mid-term grades for the pass-fail students as compared to the mean student reported mid-term grades for the traditionally graded counterpart students. The mean for the pass-fail students was 8.59 as compared to 8.85 for the ABCDF students (when 8 = B-, 9 = B, etc.). These data must be considered tentative in that 127 of the total sample failed to report what their achieved grade was at mid-term, thereby introducing a possible bias in the results.

Another way of looking at these same data is provided by the overall distributions of grades reported by the two subgroups in the 27 classes.

As shown in Table 18, the percentages in each of the categories are quite similar in the "A" category. The ABCDF graded students show a discernibly higher proportion in the A-/B+ category and a correspondingly lower proportion in the C+/C category.

On the basis of these student self-reports, it may be concluded that both categories of students were achieving on the average between a "B-" and a "B" grade. Neither group demonstrated a statistically significant superiority over the other.

10. Do students who are enrolled in courses on a pass-fail option basis report higher levels of satisfaction with those courses than do their classmates who are taking the same courses on an ABCDF graded basis?

Some advocates of pass-fail grading have speculated that in the absence of traditional letter grading students would derive greater satisfaction from their academic course work. To test that premise, a comparison was made between subjects enrolled in the 27 target classes on a pass-fail and the ABCDF graded basis. As shown by the data in Table 19, the mean level of satisfaction, considering all 27 courses collectively, was moderately high for both pass-fail (5.33) and ABCDF graded students (5.18). These mean scores were not substantially different from one another. In addition, the distributions of ratings for the two subgroups were remarkably similar to one another. It may be concluded that the global satisfaction ratings for the two subgroups fail to demonstrate that rated satisfaction with a course is enhanced by taking courses on a pass-fail graded basis.

Some of the items in Table 9 also bear indirectly on this issue. For instance, the item, "I would recommend this course to a friend who asked me about it," was responded to affirmatively by approximately 58% of the students with pass-fail experience who answered the question.

In interpreting the data in Table 9, it is important to bear in mind that the responses reflect the items that were applicable to student respondents in characterizing the pass-fail experiences they had had. The variable N shown for the various items indicates simply the number of respondents who found the item applicable. For example, the data reveal that 66% of the respondents reported that they had felt less anxious in the first pass-fail course they had taken than they typically did when taking courses on the ABCDF basis. This proportion of respondents held up when subjects reported on their experience in subsequent (2nd and 3rd) pass-fail courses as well. A second consistent finding among those with pass-fail experience in one, two, or three courses was that 39% of the respondents reported that they "got more out of the course than I usually do." Also, about a third of the students with pass-fail experience reported that they worked less hard when taking a course on a pass-fail basis than they usually do. However, another one-fifth of these students reported that they worked harder. Finally, about one-tenth of the students had taken or were then taking at least one other course in the same academic discipline as the course they took on a pass-fail option basis. An additional 15% to 30% reported that they would like to but had not yet implemented that intent.

It may be concluded from these more specific ratings that a sizable proportion of pass-fail subjects perceived their pass-fail course experiences as being more positive in certain respects than their traditionally graded courses had been. These positive outcomes include getting more out of the course, being less anxious during it, and being encouraged to explore subject areas they otherwise would not have explored.

11. *What attitudes do students, faculty, and administrators hold toward specified hypothetical changes in the pass-fail grading system?*

At the core of the extensive deliberations regarding the pass-fail option system has been the proposal regarding possible revisions of the pass-fail option system. Various proposals for change have been advanced. To assess sentiments on the part of students, faculty, and administrators with respect to the various alternatives, the investigators incorporated into the questionnaire the various proposals advanced at U. T. Austin and additional ideas suggested by the pass-fail research literature. The intent was to assay sentiment about a whole array of alternatives extending from leaving the pass-fail option system as it is, to revising it in specified ways, to eliminating it entirely. The attitudes expressed about these alternatives by students, faculty, and administrators are summarized in Tables 20, 21, and 22, respectively.

Should the pass-fail option system at U. T. Austin be abolished? Students, faculty, and administrators concurred in the judgment that the undergraduate pass-fail option should not be abolished, though they varied in the degree of their convictions. On the average, the responses to this alternative ranged from strong objection by students (1.52) to moderate opposition on the part of faculty (2.40) to slight reticence by administrators (3.44). It is noteworthy that among the student sample, strongest opposition to abolition of the pass-fail system came from those students with pass-fail experience (1.24) as compared with those students without any pass-fail experience (1.76).

Considering responses of "5," "6," and "7" on the seven-point scale as support for this option, the data reveal that approximately 4% of the student sample, 15% of the faculty sample, and 33% of the administrator sample supported the abolition of the pass-fail system.

Should the pass-fail option system at U. T. Austin be left as it is? The mean scores for the three samples fell in the intermediate range: 4.22 for the students, 4.01 for the faculty, and 3.21 for the administrators. These scores are apt to be deceptive, at least in the case of the student and faculty groups. Rather than indicating complete neutrality on the question, an example of the distribution of the ratings for the students indicates 43% as being supportive of the alternative, 32% as being apposed, and 25% as being uncertain or neutral. The faculty were almost equally divided across the range of the scale, with 35% supporting, 32% opposing, and 32% uncertain or neutral. Comparable data for the administrators, as suggested by the mean for that sample, indicates 57% opposing this alternative, 27% supporting it, and 18% uncertain or neutral.

It may be concluded that substantial opposition and support exist among the three groups on leaving the pass-fail option system as it is.

What types of changes in the pass-fail option system are desirable at U. T. Austin? All subjects in the study responded to 17 hypothetical revisions in the pass-fail option system. For all three groups, the responses given to the various alternatives presented ranged widely in the degree of support or opposition expressed. This was particularly true in the cases of students and administrators. Their mean scores on the 17 alternatives ranged from 1.52 to 6.29 for students and from 1.60 to 6.64 for administrators. The range in mean scores for faculty was from 2.30 to 5.99.

All three samples strongly supported the desirability of requiring instructors to advise pass-fail students what the minimum competence standards would be for a particular course. The administrators (5.30) and faculty (5.47) generally supported the requirement that pass-fail students do at least "C" (as opposed to "D") work in order to receive a "pass" when taking a course on a pass-fail basis. Students were much less receptive to this possibility, as indicated by their mean rating (3.60), but were not strongly opposed to requiring at least "C" work in pass-fail courses.

In general, the students were in favor of options that increased their range of alternatives and were opposed to those options that impeded them. For example, students were opposed to restricting courses they might take on a pass-fail option basis to those outside their major department and area requirements (2.53). On the other hand, faculty and administrators tended to favor this option (4.30 and 5.20, respectively). All three groups supported the proposition that professors should not know when students are registered on a pass-fail basis.

It would appear from the data presented in Tables 20, 21, and 22 that faculty and administrators are in closer accord in their sentiments than are students with either of the two groups. Generally, the diversity of views appears greatest with respect to administrators and students.

12. How knowledgeable are students, faculty, and administrators about the present pass-fail option system of grading?

A constraint upon the utility of attitudinal data is the degree to which respondents have well delineated affective dispositions, pro or con, toward the issue in question. As a means of inferring whether respondents were sufficiently conversant with the pass-fail option system to have developed stable attitudes regarding its value, the investigators sought to determine how knowledgeable the respondents felt themselves to be about the pass-fail option system. The results obtained are shown in Table 23 for all three subgroups.

On the whole, the administrator sample judged themselves more conversant with the system than did faculty or students. The mean of self-ratings of knowledgeability for the administrator sample was 5.54, as contrasted to 4.35 for the faculty sample and 4.28 for the student sample. When the student sample is divided into pass-fail and ABCDF subsamples, pass-fail students emerge as judging themselves to be appreciably more knowledgeable (5.05) than do their ABCDF counterparts (3.61).

Overall, the data for all three samples reveal feelings of average to above average knowledgeability regarding the pass-fail system of grading. However, it is important to note that 23% of the student sample, 19% of the faculty sample, and 9% of the administrator sample rated themselves "1" or "2" on the "not well informed" end of the seven-point scale. This sizable minority, particularly among the students and faculty, who felt themselves to be not very conversant with the pass-fail option system, raises a question about the reliability of their responses to some of the questions asked. This finding also suggests the need for wider dissemination of information to students and faculty about this alternative to traditional grading practices.

13. What are the types and extent of perceived administrative problems arising for both administrators and faculty in conjunction with the implementation of the pass-fail option grading system?

Taking a course on a pass-fail option basis is not restricted to transactions occurring within the classroom. Administrative considerations, such as determining one's eligibility, usually involve advisers in academic deans' offices, as well as faculty in the administrative aspects of their jobs. When a student decides to change his enrollment status, additional administrative steps are required. The investigators felt that a comprehensive evaluation of the pass-fail system must inquire into relevant administrative considerations. This was done in several ways. Initially, questions were asked about the impact or perceived impact of administrative practices on students. Subsequently, other questions inquired into the impact of administrative practices on administrators and, secondarily, on faculty.

With respect to the student data, students with some pass-fail option course experience were asked for a global judgment regarding the degree to which the administrative procedures necessary for pass-fail registration had been an inconvenience. As shown by the data in Table 24, requisite administrative procedures were not perceived as constituting a substantial inconvenience. The mean rating for those students who had had pass-fail course experience was 3.08 on a scale on which "1" equalled "not at all" and "7" equalled "to a great extent." It is noteworthy that 42% of the pass-fail student respondents rated the item "1."

Those students who had not previously taken a course at U. T. Austin on a pass-fail basis were asked the related question, "To what extent have the administrative procedures served as a deterrent to your taking a course on a pass-fail option basis?" The mean rating for this item was 4.06. This mean score is somewhat deceptive in light of the bimodal distribution of the responses. As can be seen from an inspection of the ratings in Table 24, 29% of the student respondents considered the administrative procedures not at all a deterrent (a rating of "1") while 24% considered the administrative procedures serving as a deterrent to a great extent (a rating of "7").

A parallel question was asked of the faculty. They were asked to indicate their perceptions of the degree of inconvenience administrative procedures related to pass-fail registration had caused students known to them. The results obtained are shown in Table 25. Faculty responses were quite similar to those of the pass-fail students. The mean for the faculty sample was 2.81, indicating that the inconvenience they perceived was quite limited. The inconvenience personally experienced by the faculty themselves was even more limited. When asked the extent to which administrative procedures had been a deterrent to their offering a course available on a pass-fail option basis, the mean was a minimal 1.91. Sixty-eight percent of the faculty sample reported that it was "not at all" a consideration for them.

The same questions asked of the faculty were also asked of the administrators. The data obtained are shown in Table 26. Students known to the administrators were rated as having been moderately (4.39) inconvenienced by these procedures. This relatively high mean score probably reflects the fact that students known to administrators necessarily are likely to be those requiring special assistance. The administrators' responses regarding their personal experience with administrative procedures were very similar to those of faculty. Administrators, too, indicated that the procedures were only a limited deterrent (2.43), with 54% reporting that they were not at all a deterrent.

The three target sample groups were asked an additional series of questions dealing with other administrative issues that have been raised. Responses given to these questions by the student, faculty, and administrator samples are shown in Tables 27, 28, and 29, respectively. As shown in Table 27, students tended to concur that administrative considerations appeared to be given greater weight in formulating policy regarding the pass-fail option system than were student preferences (5.59) or faculty preferences (4.93) on a scale on which "7" represents "strong agreement" with the statement. Students tended to disagree with or were uncertain (3.42) about the statement that faculty are less willing to spend time with pass-fail students than with fellow students taking the same course on an ABCDF basis. Similarly, student respondents tended to disagree (3.46) or were uncertain whether or not faculty were likely to lower course standards for pass-fail students.

Faculty responses to the same questions listed in Table 27 are shown in Table 28. Faculty appeared to be uncertain or neutral as to whether or not greater weight was given to administrative considerations over student preferences (4.10) or faculty preferences (4.05) in determining pass-fail policies. The faculty respondents disagreed with the other two questions suggesting the possibility of differential treatment being accorded pass-fail registrants in their classes (2.59 and 3.59, respectively).

As shown in Table 29, administrator responses to the administrative issues tended to parallel those of the faculty on three of the four common questions asked both groups. The single exception dealt with the issue of lowering standards for a minimally passing grade. The administrator sample was in mild agreement (4.76) with the assertion, while the faculty sample was in mild disagreement (3.59).

Two additional questions were asked of the administrator sample only. These two questions inquired as to whether administrative considerations should be given greater weight than either student or faculty preferences for determining policies about the pass-fail option system. The administrators tended to disagree that administrative considerations should be primary over student preferences (3.48) or faculty preferences (3.06).

While there may be other facets of the administration of the pass-fail option system that may be causing substantial difficulty to those involved, only limited evidence is provided by these data in support of the sterotypic "administrative hassle" as it applies to the pass-fail system or for undue administrative influence in policy formulation. Similarly, relatively little evidence exists in support of a contention that differential treatment is accorded pass-fail students, in contrast to ABCDF students, by faculty.

14. What has been the experience of administrators in implementing the pass-fail option system?

In the deliberations on the pass-fail option system, it was apparent that some concern existed regarding the task for administrators in implementing the system. The administrator sample was, therefore, queried about the nature of the experience they had.

Initially, administrators were asked to make a rating of the degree of difficulty they experienced in administering two aspects of the pass-fail option system. As shown in Table 30, administrators rated their efforts as being of moderate difficulty with respect to pass-fail registration procedures (3.71). It is important to note, however, the wide range of responses given, and particularly the relatively large proportion of respondents rating at both extremes of the continuum. For example, 45% rated the item "1" or "2," indicating minimal difficulty, and 33% rated the item "6" or "7," indicating great difficulty. Given the differential degree of involvement of the administrators in the sample, it may be that the "great difficulty" raters were those most intimately involved in the process.

The administrators' responses in characterizing the degree of difficulty experienced by them in handling the "paper work" involved in administering the pass-fail option system revealed an overall mean (3.69) suggesting limited to moderate difficulty. As with the previous question on this table, the mean is somewhat deceptive, considering the variability of responses across the range of the scale. The comments made with respect to administrators' ratings of the administration of the pass-fail option system are also applicable here. While the overall administrator sample was not experiencing particular difficulties with the attendant paper work, a significant subset (28%) of the sample was.

The results applicable to the above two questions are subject to a further constraint. Spontaneous comments given by several of the respondents regarding these questions indicate that there was some ambiguity with respect to the intent of the two questions. If alternative constructions were placed on the meaning of the two items by the respondents, the reliability of their responses would be decreased.

15. In practice, what is the degree of administrator adherence to the university and college rules specifying conditions for participation in courses on a pass-fail option basis?

In administering the pass-fail option system at U. T. Austin, the administrators or other academic advisers are asked to comply with five University rules regarding eligibility. Also, a number of the colleges and schools have additional rules for their own students. To ascertain what the nature of existing practice was in implementing these rules, administrators were asked what their experience had been in adhering to each of the applicable regulations. The results obtained are summarized in Table 31. The data reveal a tendency to adhere to all rules most of the time. Nevertheless, as can be seen from an inspection of the data, at least three rules were "rarely" or only "sometimes" enforced by a significant minority of administrators. These three rules are (1) students must state their intentions to register for a course on a pass-fail basis by a given date; (2) the department concerned must decide whether a course taken on a pass-fail basis may be counted as part of the student's major requirements; and (3) advanced standing examinations on a pass-fail basis may be permitted in required subjects. Whether or not these departures from the rules reflect on the viability of the rules themselves is a judgment that should be made by the persons most concerned.

DISCUSSION

Conclusions

In reviewing the extensive amount of data compiled, the following conclusions are indicated with respect to the basic questions posed:

Question #1: *What was the incidence of student enrollment in courses on a pass-fail option basis at U. T. Austin during the 1973 Fall Semester?*

a. The incidence of student enrollment in courses on a pass-fail option basis at U. T. Austin during the 1973 Fall Semester was 3,896 undergraduate course registrations. This number represented 2.51% of all course registrations during the semester. On the basis of the 1.89 average number of courses taken on the pass-fail option basis by the student subjects in this study, it is estimated that not more than 3,500 students accounted for these pass-fail registrations.

b. Given that the average number of pass-fail registrations for student subjects who had pass-fail experience was 1.89, and that only 7% of these subjects had taken more than three courses on a pass-fail option basis, it is clear that optional pass-fail registration is only a miniscule part of any one student's total course work.

Question #2: *Do certain colleges or schools have a larger proportionate enrollment than do others of students taking their courses on a pass-fail option basis?*

The relative incidence of pass-fail registrations across the various colleges and schools varied widely from a high of 1,119 registrations in courses offered by the College of Social and Behavioral Sciences to 14 in the College of Pharmacy. In no case was the proportion of pass-fail course registrations out of the total number of all registrations for that college or school greater than 6.54%. That proportion was achieved by the School of Nursing (System-Wide). The second highest incidence (4.53%) and the third highest (4.43%) were achieved by the College of Education and the Division of General and Comparative Studies, respectively.

Question #3: *What are the demographic characteristics of students currently taking courses on a pass-fail option basis? Specifically, what do indices of academic potential and performance, classification level, sex, college of origin, and post-baccalaureate educational plans reveal about the modal characteristics of a sample of students taking courses on a pass-fail option basis?*

a. Students in the sample who had taken courses on a pass-fail option basis tended to be similar in most respects to students who had not. However, a small but consistent intellectual superiority was noted in favor of the pass-fail students on a number of academic indices.

b. The pass-fail student was most likely to be a senior who had done all of his collegiate work at the University, was somewhat uncertain of his future career plans, and was more likely to be majoring in social and behavioral sciences or business administration than in engineering, fine arts or pharmacy.

Question #4: *What are the beliefs held by students, faculty, and administrators about the modal characteristics of students who take courses* *on a pass-fail option basis?*

a. Students, faculty, and administrators predominantly believe that those who take advantage of the pass-fail option are equally distributed across the total range of ability among students. This belief is erroneous. Students who register on a pass-fail option basis are skewed toward the upper ranges of academic potential and performance.

b. Faculty and administrators' beliefs that students are less anxious about courses they take on a pass-fail basis are confirmed by students' reports of what their actual experiences have been.

c. Faculty (52%) and administrators (74%) believed that students taking courses on a pass-fail option basis work less hard than they usually do in ABCDF graded courses. This impression was supported by the impressions of approximately one-third of the student sample. On the other hand, approximately one-fifth of the student sample reported that they had actually worked harder.

d. A majority of administrators (57%) but fewer faculty (27%) felt that students get less out of courses taken on a pass-fail option basis than courses taken on an ABCDF graded basis. On the other hand, approximately 39% of the students with pass-fail experience felt they had benefited more from the courses; only 11% felt they got less out of the courses.

Question #5: *What are the beliefs of students, faculty, and administrators about the academic orientation and commitment to learning held by undergraduate students at U. T. Austin?*

a. Faculty and administrators tend to support ABCDF grading as being essential for undergraduate U. T. Austin students, while students tend to view ABCDF grading as being noxious but necessary academic routine. Little evidence was found of commitment to "learning for learning's sake."

b. Students, faculty, and administrators concurred that grades are necessary for purposes of graduate study and job placement and as helpful feedback to both students and faculty.

c. While students tend to prefer to minimize or eliminate grading, faculty and administrators prefer not to do so.

Question #6. *What are the principal reasons reported by students for their taking courses on a pass-fail basis?*

a. The primary motives reported by students for taking courses on a pass-fail option basis were to lighten their academic course loads and to reduce the "threat value" of letter grades while taking the courses.

b. Secondarily, students felt the pass-fail option served as a useful vehicle for academic exploration in a minor or interest area. It was seen as an appreciably less viable means for helping select a major.

Question #7: *What is the degree of reported satisfaction by students with the pass-fail courses they have taken?*

a. Pass-fail students were moderately satisfied with the courses they had taken on a pass-fail basis in accomplishing the intended purposes the students had in taking them.

b. Pass-fail students were moderately satisfied in the global sense with their experience in the 27 target classes examined, but they were no more satisfied than were their ABCDF graded counterparts.

Question #8: *What are the primary reasons faculty and administrators impute to students as the bases for taking pass-fail courses, and how "legitimate" do they consider these reasons to be?*

a. Faculty and administrators are quite accurate in their perceptions of the primary reasons students are taking courses on a pass-fail basis. These reasons include: (1) lightening one's academic load; (2) maximizing learning without having to worry about grades; (3) reducing anxiety about one's grades; and (4) minimizing risk of low grades in an unfamiliar area.

b. When faculty and administrators were asked to evaluate how "legitimate" they considered student reasons for taking the courses to be, a close correspondence was not found between the most frequent reasons given (among 10 reported) and the frequency with which faculty considered those reasons to be "legitimate." The most frequent reason, "lightening one's academic load," was ranked eighth by faculty and seventh by administrators in degree of legitimacy.

c. Overall, faculty members do not perceive students as using pass-fail courses as a vehicle for lessening class attendance; however, administrators on the average tend to believe that pass-fail courses result in reduced attendance.

Question #9: *Do students who are taking courses on a pass-fail option basis receive higher or lower grades on the average than do their classmates enrolled in the same classes on an ABCDF basis?*

a. Both pass-fail and ABCDF graded students were achieving on the average at a "B-" to "B" level in the 27 target classes surveyed.

b. No significant difference in the performance of the two subgroups was found.

Question #10: *Do students who are enrolled in courses on a pass-fail option basis report higher levels of satisfaction with those courses than do their classmates who are taking the same courses on an ABCDF graded basis?*

a. Both pass-fail and ABCDF graded students in 27 target classes were moderately satisfied with the class experience they were having.

b. No significant difference existed in the relative level of overall satisfaction reported by pass-fail (5.33) and ABCDF graded students (5.18) in the 27 classes.

c. Based on their experience in all optional pass-fail courses taken at U. T. Austin, about one-third of the pass-fail students reported that they wanted to take additional courses in the disciplines in which they had taken their pass-fail work.

Question #11: *What attitudes do students, faculty, and administrators hold toward specified hypothetical changes in the pass-fail grading system?*

a. Students, faculty, and administrators concur that the undergraduate pass-fail option system of grading should not be abolished.

b. Strongest support among students for this conclusion comes from students with pass-fail experience.

c. Among those holding the opposing view, the strongest sentiment came from the administrator sample.

d. Both faculty and administrators are almost equally divided about the need for changing the system. A large proportion of both groups are either uncertain or have no particular feelings one way or the other.

e. Students, faculty, and administrators concurred in supporting the desirability of changing the present system to require specification of the minimum competence standards.

f. Students, faculty, and administrators concurred in supporting the desirability of assuring that professors have no knowledge of which students are registered on a pass-fail option basis.

g. Administrators and faculty generally supported the suggestion that pass-fail students be required to attain at least a "C" in order to receive a "pass" (CR) grade when taking a course on a pass-fail option basis; students were only mildly opposed to the suggestion.

h. Students tended to favor change options that increased their range of alternatives and were opposed to those that constrained them.

i. Faculty and administrators tended to concur in seeing a need for maintaining constraints on students' use of pass-fail options.

Question #12: *How knowledgeable are students, faculty, and administrators about the present pass-fail option system of grading?*

a. Overall, students, faculty, and administrators were moderately conversant with the pass-fail option system of grading. Among these three groups, the administrators reported that they were the most conversant.

b. A significant minority (about one-fifth) of both the student and faculty samples considered themselves almost completely nonconversant with the pass-fail option system at U. T. Austin.

Question #13: *What are the types and extent of perceived administrative problems arising for both administrators and faculty in conjunction with the implementation of the pass-fail option grading system?*

a. Administrative procedures necessary for pass-fail registration were not perceived by pass-fail students as being an inconvenience.

e. Students, faculty, and administrators concurred in supporting the desirability of changing the present system to require specification of the minimum competence standards.

f. Students, faculty, and administrators concurred in supporting the desirability of assuring that professors have no knowledge of which students are registered on a pass-fail option basis.

g. Administrators and faculty generally supported the suggestion that pass-fail students be required to attain at least a "C" in order to receive a "pass" (CR) grade when taking a course on a pass-fail option basis; students were only mildly opposed to the suggestion.

h. Students tended to favor change options that increased their range of alternatives and were opposed to those that constrained them.

i. Faculty and administrators tended to concur in seeing a need for maintaining constraints on students' use of pass-fail options.

Question #12: *How knowledgeable are students, faculty, and administrators about the present pass-fail option system of grading?*

a. Overall, students, faculty, and administrators were moderately conversant with the pass-fail option system of grading. Among these three groups, the administrators reported that they were the most conversant.

b. A significant minority (about one-fifth) of both the student and faculty samples considered themselves almost completely nonconversant with the pass-fail option system at U. T. Austin.

Question #13: *What are the types and extent of perceived administrative problems arising for both administrators and faculty in conjunction with the implementation of the pass-fail option grading system?*

a. Administrative procedures necessary for pass-fail registration were not perceived by pass-fail students as being an inconvenience.

b. The preponderance of students who had never signed up for a course on a pass-fail option basis did not consider the requisite administrative procedures as having served as a deterrent to their participation.

c. Faculty members in the sample reported that the requisite administrative procedures for pass-fail registration had not appeared to be an inconvenience to students of their acquaintance or as a deterrent to themselves in deciding whether or not to make available their courses on a pass-fail basis.

d. Administrators reported that students known to them were moderately inconvenienced by administrative procedures related to the registration process.

e. The differential findings among the three samples may be due to variable interpretations of the question, which some respondents may have construed as limited to the initial registration and others interpreted to extend to subsequent changes in registration status.

f. Student respondents tended to perceive administrative considerations as being given relatively greater weight in formulating policy about the pass-fail option system than are student or faculty preferences. Faculty and administrator respondents did not concur in this perception.

g. Students did not perceive faculty teaching courses on a pass-fail option basis as according pass-fail students differential treatment from that given ABCDF students in their classes.

h. Administrator respondents did not see administrative considerations as being given greater weight than were faculty or student preferences regarding the pass-fail option system, nor did they think they should be.

Question #14: *What has been the experience of administrators in implementing the pass-fail option system?*

a. On the average, administrator respondents in the sample rated their efforts in implementing the pass-fail option system as being of moderate difficulty.

b. For a substantial minority of the administrator respondents, implementing the pass-fail option system and attendant "paper work" have been highly difficult, while for others the process has been of minimal difficulty.

Question #15: *In practice, what is the degree of administrator adherence to the university and college rules specifying conditions for participation in courses on a pass-fail option basis?*

a. Compliance with most of the rules governing the pass-fail option system has been observed.

b. The three rules most often ignored are (1) students must state their intentions to register for a course on a pass-fail basis by a given date; (2) the department concerned must decide whether a course taken on a pass-fail basis may be counted as part of the student's major requirements; and (3) advanced standing examinations on a pass-fail basis may be permitted in required subjects.

Implications

It is significant to the investigators that the degree of controversy surrounding the optional pass-fail grading issue has been so extended, even though pass-fail registration constitutes only a relatively small proportion of the students' academic program. Two major factors may account for the difficulty: the first is a pragmatic consideration and the second is a substantive issue.

The pragmatic issue centers on the administration of the program. Those persons most intimately involved are heavily burdened by the additional workload that implementation of the pass-fail option system requires. It is not surprising that administrators strongly support the change option that proposed limiting to one the number of times a student might change his mind about his enrollment status as a pass-fail or ABCDF graded student in a course. Presumably, rule changes or increased staffing would be means of dealing with the problem at this practical level.

This second aspect is not easily dealt with. At the heart of the issue appears to be a basic value conflict between students on the one hand and faculty and administrators on the other. At stake are the faculty and administrators' commitment to academic excellence in an upwardly mobile university and the traditional prerogative of the faculty and administration to dictate the means by which educational objectives will be achieved and standards maintained. The students have equally precious values at stake. Their intent is to maximize their felt prerogative to increase their control over the character and content of their educational experience, in pursuit of goals that are likely to differ from traditional academic values to which faculty and administrators are prone to subscribe. It should, therefore, be of no surprise that students support changes in the present pass-fail option system that maximizes the range of alternatives open to them, thereby permitting actualization of their diverse intents. Similarly, it is equally consistent that faculty and administrators should continue to insist on the prerogatives to specify the nature and content of academic programs as a means of actualizing their intents.

The problem is not limited to conflicting educational objectives as ends. At issue is also the means by which these means shall be accomplished. A central ethic of import to faculty and administrators is the commitment to scholarly diligence and discipline that is so well personified in the experiences of faculty members and administrators. What is suggested by the data is a conviction on the part of faculty and administrators that the pass-fail option system may be a vehicle for circumventing the academic rigors so central to the value ethos of academia.

The resolution of the issue is dependent on the degree of willingness of the faculty and administrators to accept the legitimacy of student uses of the university for other than those to which faculty and administrators tend to subscribe--uses that reflect something other than a commitment to traditional academic ideals.

The above picture is overdrawn and oversimplified. Not all undergraduates have spurned traditional academic ideals, and many faculty and administrators are sensitive to and sympathetic with students' pursuit of their own objectives. Nevertheless, the basic conflict in this particular issue, as with a number of other localized issues, revolves around how the challenge for change is received and how it is ultimately resolved.

Footnotes

[1] Memorandum from Dr. Norman Hackerman to members of the Educational Policy Committee, October 20, 1967.

[2] D&P 4026. [Documents and Proceedings of the Faculty (later University) Council, page 4026.]

[3] D&P 4076.

[4] D&M 9282-9284. [Documents and Minutes of the General Faculty, pages 9282-9284.]

[5] D&M 9308.

[6] D&M 9297 and letter from Dr. W. T. Tucker to Dr. Norman Hackerman, February 19, 1968.

[7] Note to Mr. Byron Shipp from Ms. Betty Gibbons, with carbon to Dr. W. T. Tucker, April 4, 1968.

[8] D&P 5011-5012.

[9] D&P 5042-5043 and D&M 10449-10450.

[10] D&P 5111-5112; D&P 5163-5164 and D&M 10551-10552.

[11] D&P 5330.

[12] D&P 5328-5330.

[13] Memorandum dated March 12, 1973, to The Deans Council from Dr. Max Westbrook, for the Sub-Committee of the Deans Council.

[14] D&P 5378-5388 and D&M 10780-10790.

[15] D&P 5391.

[16] D&P 5425-5428 and D&M 10816-10820.

[17] D&P 5443-5444 and D&M 10835-10836.

[18] Berry, M. C., "The Pass-Fail Option: A Review of the Literature." Office of The Vice President for Student Affairs, The University of Texas at Austin, April 1973 (Typewritten).

[19] Letter from President Stephen H. Spurr to Dr. Ronald M. Brown, dated June 26, 1973.

[20] Berry, M. C., Appel, V. H., and Liberty, P. G., Jr., "Proposal for A Study of the Pass-Fail Option." Office of The Vice President for Student Affairs, The University of Texas at Austin, August 3, 1973 (Typewritten).

Table 1a

DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS OF THE STUDENT SAMPLE

(Frequencies)

Respondent	Sex			High School Rank						Classification								
Group	M	F	Total	Top 10%	Upper Qtr. but not top 10%	2nd Qtr.	3rd Qtr.	4th Qtr.	Total	Fr.	Soph.	Jr.	4th yr. Senior	5th yr. Senior	Grad-uate	Spec. Stud.	Other	Total
Pass-Fail Sample (N=403)	219 56%	171 44%	390 100%	179 46%	128 33%	63 16%	17 4%	6 1%	393 100%	2 1%	32 8%	74 19%	191 48%	73 18%	12 3%	5 1%	6 2%	395 100%
ABCDF Sample (N=458)	266 59%	182 41%	448 100%	178 40%	152 34%	88 20%	19 4%	10 2%	447 100%	15 3%	51 11%	133 30%	163 36%	67 15%	7 2%	11 2%	3 1%	450 100%
No Information (N=8)	3 50%	3 50%	6 100%	3 50%	1 17%	2 33%	.. ..	.. ..	6 100%	2 33%	.. ..	1 17%	1 17%	2 33%	.. ..	.. ..	.. ..	6 100%
Total Sample (N=869)	488 58%	356 42%	844 100%	360 43%	281 33%	153 18%	36 4%	16 2%	846 100%	19 2%	83 10%	208 24%	355 42%	142 17%	19 2%	16 2%	9 1%	851 100%

Go to the next page.

Table 1a (Continued)

DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS OF THE STUDENT SAMPLE

(Frequencies)

Respondent Group	Students' Major College																	
	Business Administr.	Communications	Education	Engineering	Fine Arts	Gen. & Comp. Studies	Humanities	Natural Sciences	Soc. & Behav. Scien.	Special Advising A & S	Pre-Dental	Pre-Medical	Nursing	Pharmacy	Law	Architecture	No Information	Total
Pass-Fail Sample (N=403)	71 18%	38 9%	20 5%	9 2%	10 2%	20 5%	34 8%	46 11%	106 26%	2 b	.. ..	2 b	15 4%	3 1%	.. ..	3 1%	24 6%	403 98% [a]
ABCDF Sample (N=458)	81 18%	33 7%	13 3%	31 7%	11 2%	19 4%	23 5%	76 17%	89 19%	2 b	1 b	3 1%	17 4%	43 9%	.. ..	2 b	14 3%	458 99% [a]
No Information (N=8)	1 13%	.. ..	.. ..	.. ..	.. ..	.. ..	2 25%	1 13%	3 37%	.. ..	.. ..	.. ..	.. ..	.. ..	.. ..	.. ..	1 13%	8 101% [a]
Total Sample (N=869)	153 18%	71 8%	33 4%	40 5%	21 2%	39 4%	59 7%	123 14%	198 23%	4 b	1 b	5 1%	32 4%	46 5%	.. ..	5 1%	39 4%	867 100%

Go to the next page.

Table 1a (Continued)

DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS OF THE STUDENT SAMPLE

(Frequencies)

Respondent Group	Transfers			Planning to go to graduate or professional school?				Distribution Of The Number of Pass-Fail Courses Taken By Students In The Sample[c]								
	Yes	No	Total	Yes	No	Undecided	Total	0 Course	1 Course	2 Courses	3 Courses	4 Courses	5 Courses	6 Courses	No Info.	Total
Pass-Fail Sample (N=403)	150	244	394	165	102	120	387	..	183	122	69	17	11	1	..	403 [c]
	38%	62%	100%	43%	26%	31%	100%	..	45%	30%	17%	4%	3%	b	..	99%[a]
ABCDF Sample (N=458)	198	251	449	166	126	153	445	458	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	458
	44%	56%	100%	37%	28%	34%	99%[a]	100%	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	100%
No. Information (N=8)	..	6	6	3	2	1	6	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	8	8
	..	100%	100%	50%	33%	17%	100%	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	100%	100%
Total Sample (N=869)	348	501	849	334	230	274	838	458	183	122	69	17	11	1	8	869 [c]
	41%	59%	100%	40%	27%	33%	100%	53%	21%	14%	8%	2%	1%	b	1%	100%

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[a] Differs from 100% only because of rounding errors.

[b] Less than 1%.

[c] Mean number of courses taken by the 403 subjects with pass-fail experience equalled 1.89. Mean number for the total student sample equalled 0.88.

Table 1b

DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS OF THE STUDENT SAMPLE

(Means and Standard Deviations)

Respondent Group		SAT Scores				Grade Point Averages at U. T. Austin						
		Verbal	Math	Total		Cumulative Overall	Cumulative Major	If No Major, Cumulative In Upper Division Courses		Certitude About Career Plans (On 7-Point Scale)		GPA At College From Which Transferred
Pass-Fail Sample (N=403)	N	212	212	212	N	385	358	48	N	393	N	147
	Mean	574	586	1160	Mean	3.05	3.18	3.18	Mean	4.80	Mean	3.05
	S.D.	95	91	146	S.D.	.50	.48	.45	S.D.	1.92	S.D.	.62
ABCDF Sample (N=458)	N	239	239	239	N	420	392	49	N	451	N	200
	Mean	554	571	1125	Mean	2.82	3.02	2.99	Mean	4.87	Mean	2.91
	S.D.	98	96	151	S.D.	.54	.56	.48	S.D.	1.82	S.D.	.54
No Information (N=8)	N	3	3	3	N	3	3	..	N	7	N	..
	Mean	657	627	1283	Mean	2.91	3.13	..	Mean	5.14	Mean	..
	S.D.	120	31	131	S.D.	.39	.25	..	S.D.	1.64	S.D.	..
Total Sample (N=869)	N	454	454	454	N	808	753	97	N	851	N	347
	Mean	564	579	1142	Mean	2.93	3.10	3.08	Mean	4.84	Mean	2.97
	S.D.	98	94	150	S.D.	.54	.53	.48	S.D.	1.86	S.D.	.58

Table 2a

SUMMARY DESCRIPTION OF ENROLLMENTS BY COLLEGE OR SCHOOL OF THE CLASSES FROM WHICH STUDENT SUBJECTS WERE TAKEN

College or School	Number of Undergraduate Registrations (Fall, 1973)	Number of Undergraduate Registrations In The Sample	Percent Of Total Registrations Represented In The Sample
School of Architecture	2,822	81	2.87%
College of Business Administration	16,137	94	0.58%
School of Communications	5,847	45	0.77%
College of Education	11,251	36	0.32%
College of Engineering	7,276	96	1.32%
College of Fine Arts	10,237	59	0.58%
Division of General and Comparative Studies	4,494	53	1.18%
College of Humanities	25,019	54	0.22%
College of Natural Sciences	36,289	96	0.26%
College of Pharmacy	2,103	62	2.95%
College of Social and Behavioral Sciences	33,031	184	0.56%
School of Nursing (System-Wide)	627	9	1.44%
Overall	155,133	869	0.56%

Table 2b

SUMMARY DESCRIPTION OF THE CLASSES FROM WHICH THE STUDENT SUBJECTS WERE TAKEN

Class Number	Class	Number In Class	Number of P-F Registrants	Number of ABCDF Graded Students
1	PI 104	10	2	8
2	CH 325M	49	7	42
3	MUS 606A (a)	25	14	11
4	MUS 606A (b)	34	22	12
5	INS 357	16	4	12
6	HE 320	26	9	17
7	PHY 341	21	4	17
8	N 347	9	6	3
9	GOV 366	86	23	63
10	HIS 355	41	6	35
11	CC 630A	26	7	19
12	PEN 363	49	8	41
13	OAL 340	11	4	7
14	GS 339	13	6	7
15	E 379M	17	8	9
16	J 325	21	3	18
17	GS 321	40	5	35
18	PHR 338	62	3	59
19	ARC 348	81	6	75
20	ANT 325K	35	7	28
21	SPE 111L	24	8	16
22	PEN 320	47	6	41
23	EDP 667B1	11	5	6

Go to the next page.

Table 2b (Continued)

SUMMARY DESCRIPTION OF THE CLASSES FROM WHICH THE STUDENT SUBJECTS WERE TAKEN

Class Number	Class	Number In Class	Number of P-F Registrants	Number of ABCDF Graded Students
24	SOC 320K	22	4	18
25	RE 358	55	13	42
26	OA 304	23	4	19
27	EDP 667A1	15	1	14
Total		869	195	674

Table 3

DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS OF THE FACUTLY AND ADMINISTRATOR SAMPLES

Respondent Group	Sex			Academic Rank									Years on Faculty At U. T. Austin						
	M	F	Total	T.A.	A.I.	Inc.	Acct. P.	Asso. P.	P.	L.	Other	Total	Less Than 1 yr.	1-3 yrs.	4-6 yrs.	7-10 yrs.	11-15 yrs.	16 or More	Total
Faculty Sample (N=269)	219 81%	50 19%	269 100%	3 1%	.. ..	24 9%	71 26%	69 26%	98 36%	4 1%	.. ..	269 99%[a]	27 10%	46 17%	63 23%	42 16%	34 13%	57 21%	269 100%
Adminis-trator Sample (N=35)	29 85%	5 15%	34 100%	.. ..	.. ..	1 3%	5 15%	5 15%	16 48%	1 3%	5 15%	33 99%[a]	3 9%	5 15%	6 18%	1 3%	7 21%	11 33%	33 99%[a]

Go to the next page.

Table 3 (Continued)

DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS OF THE FACULTY AND ADMINISTRATOR SAMPLES

Years As U. T. Austin Administrator							Estimated Number of Undergraduate Students Taught On Pass-Fail Option Basis at U. T. Austin									
Less Than 1 yr.	1-3 yrs.	4-6 yrs.	7-10 yrs.	11-15 yrs.	16 or More Years	Total	0	1-2	3-7	8-15	16-24	25-50	51-100	101-500	Over 500	Total
(Not Asked)							55 21%	19 7%	57 21%	48 18%	34 13%	28 10%	14 5%	12 4%	.. ..	267 99%[a]
5 15%	12 35%	6 18%	4 12%	6 18%	1 3%	34 101%[a]	3 9%	1 3%	5 15%	3 9%	1 3%	7 21%	2 6%	6 18%	5 15%	33 99%[a]

Go to the next page.

Table 3 (Continued)

DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS OF THE FACULTY AND ADMINISTRATOR SAMPLES

Respondent Group	Total Years Teaching Experience (U.T. Austin & Elsewhere)							Student Class Level At Which You Most Often Teach					
	Less Than 1 yr.	1-3 yrs.	4-6 yrs.	7-10 yrs.	11-15 yrs.	16 or More Years	Total	Undergrad. Lower Div.	Undergrad. Upper Div.	Graduate (Masters)	Graduate (Doctoral)	Other	Total
Faculty Sample (N=269)	9 3%	29 11%	51 19%	61 23%	36 13%	83 31%	269 100%	53 20%	126 47%	52 20%	34 13%	1 b	263 100%
Adminis-trator Sample (N=35)	2 6%	5 15%	3 9%	2 6%	3 9%	18 55%	33 100%	(Not Asked)					

Go to the next page.

Table 3 (Continued)

DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS OF THE FACULTY AND ADMINISTRATIVE SAMPLES

Respondent Group	Administrative Duties Occupy 100% Of Time			Currently Teaching One Or More Courses Being Taken By Some Undergraduates Electively On P-F Option Basis			Have Previously Taught One Or More Courses At U.T. Austin Taken By Undergraduates On P-F Option Basis			To Best Of My Knowledge No Undergraduate Has Taken Any Of My Courses At U.T. Austin On P-F Option Basis			The Course(s) I Teach Is(Are) Elective, But Is(Are) Only Offered On P-F Option Basis			The Course(s) I Teach Is(Are) Required, But Is(Are) Only Offered On P-F Option Basis		
	Yes	No or No info.	Total	Yes	No or No info.	Total	Yes	No or No info.	Total	Yes	No or No info.	Total	Yes	No or No info.	Total	Yes	No or No info.	Total
Faculty Sample (N=269)	(Not asked)			139 52%	130 48%	269 100%	171 64%	98 36%	269 100%	71 26%	198 74%	269 100%	(Not asked)			(Not asked)		
Administrator Sample (N-35)	12 34%	23 66%	35 100%	13 37%	22 63%	35 100%	16 46%	19 54%	35 100%	10 29%	25 71%	35 100%	2 6%	33 94%	35 100%	.. ..	35 100%	35 100%

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[a] Differs from 100% only because of rounding errors.

[b] Less than 1%.

Table 4

COMPARISON OF UNDERGRADUATE REGISTRATIONS ACROSS ALL COLLEGES AND SCHOOLS OF THE UNIVERSITY

College, Division or School	Number of Pass-Fail Registrations In Courses Offered By That College, Division Or School	Rank Order For Absolute No. of Registrations	Total Number of Registrations In All Courses Offered By That College, Division, Or School in The 1973 Fall Semester	Percent of Pass-Fail Registrations Out of the Total Number of All Registrations Within That College, Division or School	Rank Order For Percent of Pass-Fail Registrations Out of Total Registrations
College or Division:					
Soc. & Behav. Sci.	1,119	1st	33,031	3.39%	3rd
Humanities	792	2nd	25,019	3.17%	4th
Education	510	3rd	11,251	4.53%	1st
Natural Sciences	461	4th	36,289	1.27%	7th
Bus. Adminis.	319	5th	16,137	1.98%	6th
Fine Arts	207	6th	10,237	2.02%	5th
Gen. & Comp. Stud.	199	7th	4,494	4.43%	2nd
Engineering	38	8th	7,276	.52%	9th
Pharmacy	14	9th	2,103	.67%	8th
School:					
Communications	166	1st	5,847	2.84%	2nd
Nursing (System-Wide)	41	2nd	627	6.54%	1st
Architecture	30	3rd	2,822	1.06%	3rd
Total	3,896		155,133	2.51%	

Table 5

COMPARISON OF BELIEFS HELD BY PASS-FAIL AND BY ABCDF STUDENTS ABOUT THOSE WHO TAKE PASS-FAIL COURSES AT U. T. AUSTIN

Respondent Group	Reported Beliefs About Those Who Are The Pass-Fail Students					
	Better Students	Poorer Students	Average Students	Approximately Equal Numbers of Better, Poorer and Average Students	Students from Both Extremes of Ability Levels (the Poorer and the Better)	Total
Pass-Fail Sample (N=403)	39 10%	5 1%	40 10%	226 58%	77 20%	387 99%[a]
ABCDF Sample (N=458)	18 4%	26 6%	76 17%	196 45%	122 28%	438 100%
No Information (N=8)	.. ..	.. ..	.. ..	3 60%	2 40%	5 100%
Total Sample (N=869)	57 7%	31 4%	116 14%	425 51%	201 24%	830 100%

[a] Differs from 100% only because of rounding errors.

Table 6

COMPARISON OF BELIEFS HELD BY FACULTY AND BY ADMINISTRATORS ABOUT THOSE WHO TAKE PASS-FAIL COURSES AT U. T. AUSTIN

Respondent Groups	N	Reported Beliefs About Those Who Are The Pass-Fail Students					
		Better Students	Poorer Students	Average Students	Approximately Equal Numbers of Better, Poorer and Average Students	Students from Both Extremes of Ability Levels (the poorer and the better)	Total
Faculty Sample	269	28 12%	12 5%	36 15%	107 46%	50 21%	233 99%[a]
Administrator Sample	35	4 12%	6 18%	6 18%	16 47%	2 6%	34 101%[a]

[a] Differs from 100% only because of rounding errors.

Table 7

FACULTY IMPRESSIONS OF U. T. AUSTIN UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS WHO ELECT COURSES ON PASS-FAIL OPTION BASIS (N=269)

IMPRESSION: They Most Typically . . .	N of Sample that Checked Item	% of Sample
. are less anxious about such courses than they are when graded on an ABCDF basis.	191	71%
. work less hard than they usually do for courses.	141	52%
. would not have taken those courses if they had been offered only on an ABCDF basis.	88	33%
. get less out of courses than they usually do when the courses are graded only on an ABCDF basis.	72	27%
. are encouraged to take additional course work in the same areas as a direct result of their experience.	51	19%
. tend to recommend to friends that they take undergraduate courses on a pass-fail basis whenever possible.	43	16%
. work harder than they usually do for courses.	6	2%
. I have no basis for responding to this question.	55	20%

Table 8

ADMINISTRATIVE IMPRESSIONS OF U. T. AUSTIN UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS WHO ELECT COURSES ON PASS-FAIL OPTION BASIS (N=35)

IMPRESSION: They Most Typically . . .	N of Sample That Checked Item	% of Sample
. are less anxious about such courses than they are when graded on an ABCDF basis.	27	77%
. work less hard than they usually do for courses.	26	74%
. get less out of courses than they usually do when they are graded on an ABCDF basis.	20	57%
. tend to recommend to friends that they take undergraduate courses on a Pass-Fail basis whenever possible.	10	29%
. would not have taken those courses if they had been offered only on an ABCDF basis.	10	29%
. are encouraged to take additional course work in the same areas as a direct result of their experience.	7	20%
. work harder than they usually do for courses.	2	6%
. I have no basis for responding to this question.	3	9%

Table 9

EVALUATIVE OUTCOMES REGARDING COURSES TAKEN ON A PASS-FAIL BASIS AS REPORTED BY 403 STUDENTS

WITH PASS-FAIL EXPERIENCE AT U. T. AUSTIN

Evaluative Outcomes	Most Recent P-F Course Taken			Next Most Recent P-F Course Taken			3rd Most Recent P-F Course Taken		
	N Of Possible Respondents For Item	N Of Actual Respondents For Item	% Of Total Respondents Out Of Possible N Of Respondents	N Of Possible Respondents For Item	N Of Actual Respondents For Item	% Of Total Respondents Out Of Possible N Of Respondents	N Of Possible Respondents For Item	N Of Actual Respondents For Item	% Of Total Respondents Out Of Possible N Of Respondents
I was less anxious about the course than I usually am when I am graded on an ABCDF basis.	403	267	66%	220	146	66%	98	65	66%
I would recommend this course to a friend who asked me about it.	403	242	60%	220	115	52%	98	45	46%
I got more out of the course than I usually do when graded on an ABCDF basis.	403	156	39%	220	84	38%	98	40	41%
I worked less hard than I usually do for a course.	403	149	37%	220	86	39%	98	31	32%
This course counted toward fullfilling specified Area Requirements outside the department in which I'm majoring.	403	139	34%	220	69	31%	98	22	22%
I would not have taken this course if it had been offered only on an ABCDF basis.	403	123	31%	220	75	34%	98	20	20%
It caused me to want to take at least one additional course in the same academic discipline, but I have not yet done so.	403	118	29%	220	58	26%	98	15	15%
I worked harder than I usually do for a course.	403	75	19%	220	49	22%	98	18	18%
I got less out of the course than I usually do when graded only on an ABCDF basis.	403	40	10%	220	35	16%	98	9	9%
It caused me to take at least one other course in the same academic dicipline, and I have done or am now doing so.	403	30	7%	220	27	12%	98	23	23%

Table 10

STUDENT BELIEFS ABOUT STUDENT ACADEMIC ORIENTATIONS AND ABOUT THE PURPOSES SERVED BY GRADING

Beliefs	Degree of Opposition Or Support Revealed By Total Sample (N=869)									Total Sample [a] (N=869)	Pass-Fail Sample (N=403)	ABCDF Sample (N=458)
	Strongly Oppose 1	2	3	4	5	Strongly Support 6	7	Total				
Grades do not reflect how much undergraduate students get out of a course.	11 1%	28 3%	36 4%	31 4%	101 12%	196 23%	451 53%	854 100%	N Mean S.D.	854 6.02 1.42	398 6.13 1.33	451 5.91 1.49
Most undergraduate students who elect to take courses on a pass-fail option basis work less hard than for ABCDF graded courses.	69 8%	73 9%	99 12%	146 17%	193 23%	156 19%	107 13%	843 101%[b]	N Mean S.D.	843 4.44 1.77	390 4.27 1.83	448 4.58 1.70
Grades are needed to provide faculty with feedback about the degree to which they are getting their subject matter across to undergraduate students.	92 11%	64 8%	83 10%	99 12%	251 30%	189 22%	69 8%	847 101%[b]	N Mean S.D.	847 4.41 1.77	393 4.22 1.83	449 4.58 1.71
Most undergraduate students need the incentive of grades to motivate them to work.	92 11%	80 9%	111 13%	109 13%	194 23%	176 21%	90 11%	852 101%[b]	N Mean S.D.	852 4.32 1.84	396 4.16 1.84	451 4.45 1.83
The purposes of higher education would be better served if there were no undergraduate grades at all.	109 13%	106 13%	139 16%	156 18%	108 13%	85 10%	142 17%	845 100%	N Mean S.D.	845 4.03 1.97	391 4.15 2.01	449 3.93 1.93
If it weren't for graduate school entrance requirements undergraduate grades would be unnecessary.	102 12%	121 14%	150 18%	141 17%	109 13%	100 12%	123 15%	846 101%[b]	N Mean S.D.	846 3.98 1.94	391 4.19 1.92	450 3.80 1.93
Most undergraduate students who elect to take courses on a pass-fail option basis are achievement-oriented.	41 5%	86 10%	140 17%	359 43%	108 13%	61 7%	36 4%	831 99%[b]	N Mean S.D.	831 3.88 1.35	381 4.05 1.39	445 3.74 1.31
Most undergraduate students will do the least work they can to get by.	92 11%	126 15%	142 17%	150 18%	167 20%	102 12%	67 8%	846 101%[b]	N Mean S.D.	846 3.88 1.77	391 3.81 1.75	450 3.94 1.77

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Table 10 (Continued)

STUDENT BELIEFS ABOUT STUDENT ACADEMIC ORIENTATIONS AND ABOUT THE PURPOSES SERVED BY GRADING

Beliefs	Degree of Opposition Or Support Revealed By Total Sample (N=869)									Total Sample[a] (N=869)	Pass-Fail Sample (N=403)	ABCDF Sample (N=458)
	Strongly Oppose 1	2	3	4	5	Strongly Support 6	7	Total				
If it weren't for getting a job, undergraduate grades would be unnecessary.	113	123	143	148	134	82	95	838	N	838	388	445
	13%	15%	17%	18%	16%	10%	11%	100%	Mean	3.83	3.89	3.77
									S.D.	1.87	1.90	1.85
Grades are needed to let undergraduate students know where they stand with respect to mastery of the course content.	161	112	116	81	200	137	46	853	N	853	396	452
	19%	13%	14%	9%	23%	16%	5%	99%[b]	Mean	3.75	3.61	3.89
									S.D.	1.91	1.90	1.92
Most undergraduate students are interested in learning for learning's sake.	73	122	233	158	128	92	39	845	N	845	391	449
	9%	14%	28%	19%	15%	11%	5%	101%[b]	Mean	3.68	3.81	3.58
									S.D.	1.59	1.61	1.57
Grades are needed to let undergraduate students know where they stand relative to other students in the course.	171	116	103	112	187	105	53	847	N	847	392	450
	20%	14%	12%	13%	22%	12%	6%	99%[b]	Mean	3.66	3.63	3.68
									S.D.	1.91	1.86	1.95
It is almost impossible for an undergraduate student to get a failing grade when taking a course on a pass-fail option basis.	127	147	123	205	99	92	48	841	N	841	389	447
	15%	17%	15%	24%	12%	11%	6%	100%	Mean	3.56	3.39	3.71
									S.D.	1.75	1.83	1.68
It might be to an undergraduate student's disadvantage later on if he/she were to take courses on a pass-fail basis.	142	141	110	205	124	82	37	841	N	841	390	446
	17%	17%	13%	24%	15%	10%	4%	100%	Mean	3.50	3.22	3.75
									S.D.	1.73	1.78	1.65
Most undergraduate students are more interested in the subject matter of their course than in the grades they receive.	210	226	168	75	79	57	36	851	N	851	395	451
	25%	26%	20%	9%	9%	7%	4%	100%	Mean	2.88	2.97	2.81
									S.D.	1.73	1.71	1.73

[a] Possible options are listed in decending order of mean rating.
[b] Differs from 100% only because of rounding errors.

Table 11

FACULTY BELIEFS HELD ABOUT STUDENT ACADEMIC ORIENTATIONS AND ABOUT THE PURPOSES SERVED BY GRADING

Beliefs	Degree Of Opposition Or Support Revealed By Total Faculty Sample (N=269)							Total	Mean	S.D.
	Strongly Disagree 1	2	3	4	5	6	Strongly Agree 7			
Most undergraduate students need the incentive of grades to motivate them to work.	8 3%	15 6%	18 7%	12 5%	70 26%	97 37%	45 17%	265 101%[a]	5.23	1.52
Grades are needed to let undergraduate students know where they stand with respect to mastery of the course content.	12 5%	15 6%	20 8%	24 9%	58 22%	78 29%	58 22%	265 101%[a]	5.14	1.67
Most undergraduate students who elect to take courses on a pass-fail option work less hard than for ABCDF graded courses.	8 3%	21 8%	22 8%	61 23%	57 22%	54 21%	37 14%	260 99%[a]	4.72	1.58
Grades are needed to provide faculty with feedback about the degree to which they are getting across to undergraduate students.	23 9%	25 9%	23 9%	21 8%	65 24%	73 27%	36 14%	266 100%	4.67	1.83
Grades are needed to let undergraduate students know where they stand relative to other students in the course.	24 9%	30 11%	16 6%	34 13%	52 20%	65 24%	45 17%	266 100%	4.64	1.90
Grades do not reflect how much undergraduate students get out of a course.	11 4%	48 18%	36 14%	20 8%	51 19%	61 23%	38 14%	265 100%	4.46	1.85
It might be to an undergraduate students' disadvantage later on if he/she were to take courses on a pass-fail basis.	19 7%	22 8%	35 13%	63 24%	57 22%	40 15%	26 10%	262 99%[a]	4.30	1.66
Most undergraduate students will do the least work they can to get by.	14 5%	47 18%	38 14%	40 15%	64 24%	47 18%	15 6%	265 100%	4.11	1.67

Go to the next page.

Table 11 (Continued)

FACULTY BELIEFS HELD ABOUT STUDENT ACADEMIC ORIENTATIONS AND ABOUT THE PURPOSES SERVED BY GRADING

Beliefs	Degree Of Opposition Or Support Revealed By Total Faculty Sample (N=269)							Total	Mean	S.D.
	Strongly Disagree 1	2	3	4	5	6	Strongly Agree 7			
It is almost impossible for an undergraduate student to get a failing grade when taking a course on a pass-fail option basis.	36 14%	50 19%	25 10%	38 14%	45 17%	42 16%	27 10%	263 100%	3.91	1.95
Most undergraduate students who elect to take courses on a pass-fail option basis are achievement oriented.	28 11%	37 14%	33 13%	109 42%	33 13%	15 6%	2 1%	257 100%	3.53	1.38
Most undergraduate students are interested in learning for learning's sake.	38 14%	65 25%	69 26%	39 15%	32 12%	15 6%	5 2%	263 100%	3.10	1.51
Most undergraduate students are more interested in the subject matter of their courses than in the grades they receive.	38 14%	70 26%	75 28%	36 14%	27 10%	16 6%	3 1%	265 99%[a]	3.02	1.45
The purposes of higher education would be better served if there were no undergraduate grades at all.	106 41%	43 16%	32 12%	24 9%	18 7%	14 5%	24 9%	261 99%[a]	2.78	2.02
If it weren't for getting a job, undergraduate grades would be unnecessary,	97 37%	62 24%	40 15%	18 7%	18 7%	17 6%	11 4%	263 100%	2.59	1.77
If it weren't for graduate school entrance requirements, undergraduate grades would be unnecessary.	101 38%	65 25%	36 14%	19 7%	13 5%	16 6%	14 5%	264 100%	2.55	1.80

[a] Differs from 100% only because of rounding errors.

Table 12

ADMINISTRATOR BELIEFS HELD ABOUT STUDENT ACADEMIC ORIENTATIONS AND ABOUT THE PURPOSES SERVED BY GRADING

Beliefs	Degree Of Opposition Or Support Revealed By Total Administrator Sample (N=35)							Total	Mean	S.D.
	Strongly Oppose 1	2	3	4	5	6	Strongly Support 7			
Grades are needed to let undergraduate students know where they stand with respect to mastery of the course content.	.. ..	2 6%	2 6%	1 3%	13 37%	12 34%	5 14%	35 100%	5.31	1.26
Most undergraduate students who elect to take courses on a pass-fail option basis work less hard than for ABCDF graded courses.	1 3%	2 6%	4 11%	2 6%	8 23%	6 17%	12 34%	35 100%	5.29	1.72
Most undergraduate students need the incentive of grades to motivate them to work.	.. ..	2 6%	3 9%	6 17%	10 29%	11 31%	3 9%	35 101%[a]	4.97	1.30
Grades are needed to provide faculty with feedback about the degree to which they are getting their subject matter across to undergraduate students.	1 3%	5 14%	2 6%	3 9%	9 26%	10 29%	5 14%	35 101%[a]	4.83	1.70
It might be to an undergraduate student's disadvantage later on if he/she were to take courses on a pass-fail basis.	1 3%	3 9%	4 11%	3 9%	11 31%	8 23%	5 14%	35 100%	4.83	1.59
Grades are needed to let undergraduate students know where they stand relative to other students in the course.	.. ..	3 9%	5 14%	5 14%	10 29%	8 23%	4 11%	35 100%	4.77	1.46
It is almost impossible for an undergraduate student to get a failing grade when taking a course on a pass-fail option basis.	.. ..	4 11%	5 14%	7 20%	6 17%	9 26%	4 11%	35 99%[a]	4.66	1.55
Grades do not reflect how much undergraduate students get out of a course.	2 6%	7 20%	3 9%	2 6%	9 26%	9 26%	3 9%	35 102%[a]	4.37	1.82

Go to the next page.

Table 12 (Continued)

ADMINISTRATOR BELIEFS HELD ABOUT STUDENT ACADEMIC ORIENTATIONS AND ABOUT THE PURPOSES SERVED BY GRADING

Beliefs	Degree Of Opposition Or Support Revealed By Total Administrator Sample (N=35)							Total	Mean	S.D.
	Strongly Oppose 1	2	3	4	5	6	Strongly Support 7			
Most undergraduate students will do the least work they can to get by.	3 9%	9 26%	5 14%	5 14%	7 20%	4 11%	2 6%	35 100%	3.69	1.74
Most undergraduate students are interested in learning for learning's sake.	5 14%	5 14%	9 26%	2 6%	12 34%	2 6%	.. ..	35 100%	3.49	1.56
Most undergraduate students who elect to take courses on a pass-fail option basis are achievement oriented.	5 14%	9 26%	3 9%	10 29%	8 23%	.. ..	.. ..	35 101%[a]	3.20	1.41
Most undergraduate students are more interested in the subject matter of their courses than in the grades they receive.	2 6%	11 31%	13 37%	6 17%	2 6%	1 3%	.. ..	35 100%	2.94	1.09
If it weren't for graduate school entrance requirements, undergraduate grades would be unnecessary.	14 40%	9 26%	6 17%	3 9%	1 3%	2 6%	.. ..	35 101%[a]	2.26	1.42
If it weren't for getting a job, undergraduate grades would be unnecessary.	15 43%	11 31%	3 9%	3 9%	1 3%	2 6%	.. ..	35 101%[a]	2.14	1.42
The purposes of higher education would be better served if there were no undergraduate grades at all.	19 54%	7 20%	3 9%	2 6%	1 3%	2 6%	1 3%	35 101%[a]	2.11	1.65

[a] Differs from 100% only because of rounding errors.

Table 13

SUMMARY OF STUDENTS' PRIMARY INTENDED PURPOSES FOR TAKING PASS-FAIL COURSES

AND THEIR RATED SATISFACTION WITH THOSE COURSES IN MEETING THOSE INTENTS,

AS REPORTED BY 403 STUDENTS WITH PASS-FAIL EXPERIENCE AT U. T. AUSTIN

Students' Intended Purposes For Taking Pass-Fail Courses[a]	Number Of Respondents Checking Applicable Category	% Of Those 403 Students Having P-F Experience	Mean Degree Of Satisfaction With Course, In Accomplishing Students' Intent (Based on 7-Point Scale)	S.D.
To lighten my load.	307	76%	5.24	1.62
To maximize my learning without having to worry about the grade.	278	69%	5.87	1.41
To reduce anxiety about my grades.	256	64%	5.64	1.57
To minimize the risk of low grades in an unfamiliar area.	249	62%	5.59	1.46
To enable me to take courses outside my major area for exploratory purposes as a possible minor or interest area.	207	51%	5.95	1.34
To avoid competition with students majoring in the area.	145	36%	5.32	1.66
Had never taken a pass-fail course before and wanted to try it.	134	33%	5.12	1.92
Because I'm opposed in principle to other means of grading.	130	32%	5.53	1.68
To enable me to hold a part-time job.	126	31%	5.16	1.85
To help me in selecting my major.	86	21%	3.71	2.10

[a] Students' intended purposes are listed in descending order of popularity.

Table 14

SUMMARY OF PRESUMED REASONS FOR STUDENTS' TAKING PASS-FAIL COURSES AT U. T. AUSTIN AND THOSE RATED "LEGITIMATE"

BY FACULTY WHO HAVE TAUGHT PASS-FAIL COURSES AT U. T. AUSTIN (N=198)

Presumed Reasons for Taking Pass-Fail Courses[a]	Number of Respondents Checking Applicable Categories	% Of 198 Faculty Having Taught Courses On P-F Basis At U. T. Austin	Number Who Rated As "Legitimate" Listed Reason For Students' Taking Courses P-F At U. T. Austin	% Of 198 Faculty Having Taught Courses On P-F Basis at U.T. Austin
To minimize the risk of low grades in an unfamiliar area.	142	72%	138	70%
To reduce anxiety about grades.	116	59%	101	51%
To lighten their load.	97	49%	41	21%
To get by with less effort.	92	46%	6	3%
To enable them to take courses outside their major areas for exploratory purposes as possible minors or interest areas.	91	46%	155	78%
To maximize their learning without worrying about their grades.	75	38%	133	67%
To avoid competition with students majoring in the area.	65	33%	85	43%
Because they were opposed in principle to other means of grading.	19	10%	60	30%
To enable them to hold part-time jobs.	17	9%	26	13%
As an aid to the selection of a major.	12	6%	120	61%
Because they have never taken a pass-fail course before and wanted to try it.	11	6%	25	13%
No basis for responding.	13	7%	2	1%

[a] Faculty presumed reasons are listed in descending order of mention.

Table 15

SUMMARY OF PRESUMED REASONS FOR STUDENTS' TAKING PASS-FAIL COURSES AT U. T. AUSTIN AND THOSE RATED "LEGITIMATE"

AS REPORTED BY 35 UNIVERSITY ADMINISTRATORS AT U. T. AUSTIN

Administrator Perceived Primary Reasons For Students Taking Pass-Fail Courses	N of Respondents Checking Applicable Categories	% Of Total Administrator Sample	N Who Rated As "Legitimate" Listed Reasons For Taking Courses P-F At U.T. Austin	% Of Total Administrator Sample
To lighten their load.	28	80%	9	26%
To minimize the risk of low grades in an unfamiliar area.	25	71%	23	66%
To get by with less effort.	23	66%	2	6%
To avoid competition with students majoring in the area.	20	57%	19	54%
To reduce anxiety about grades.	20	57%	17	49%
To maximize their learning without worrying about their grades.	7	20%	23	66%
To enable them to take courses outside their major areas for exploratory purposes as possible minors or interest areas.	17	49%	27	77%
To enable them to hold part-time jobs.	7	20%	6	17%
As an aid to the selection of a major.	6	17%	22	63%
Because they had never taken a pass-fail course before and wanted to try it.	6	17%	4	11%
Because they were opposed in principle to other means of grading.	2	6%	8	23%
I have no basis for responding.	2	6%	..	..

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[a] Perceived primary reasons are listed in descending order of mention.

Table 16

COMPARISON OF THE RANK ORDERING OF FREQUENCY OF REASONS REPORTED BY PASS-FAIL STUDENTS, FACULTY, AND ADMINISTRATORS FOR TAKING COURSES ON A PASS-FAIL OPTION BASIS [a]

Items	Rank Order Of Item Selected By Pass-Fail Students	Rank Order Of Item Selected By Faculty		Rank Order Of Item Selected By Administrators	
		Frequency	Legitimacy	Frequency	Legitimacy
To lighten my load.	1	3	8	1	7
To maximize my learning without having to worry about my grades.	2	5	3	5	2.5
To reduce anxiety about my grades.	3	2	5	3.5	6
To minimize the risk of low grades in an unfamiliar area.	4	1	2	2	2.5
To enable me to take courses outside my major area for exploratory purposes as a possible minor or interest area.	5	4	1	6	1
To avoid competition with students majoring in the area.	6	6	6	3.5	5
Had never taken a pass-fail course before and wanted to try it.	7	10	9.5	8.5	10
Because I'm opposed in principle to other means of grading.	8	7	7	8	10
To enable me then to hold a part-time job.	9	8	9.5	9	7
To help me in selecting my major.	10	9	4	8.5	4

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[a] Only the 10 reasons judged in common by students, faculty, and administrators are included in the ranking in this table.

Table 17

FACULTY (N=269) AND ADMINISTRATORS' (N=35)

OPINIONS REGARDING CLASS ATTENDANCE OF PASS-FAIL AND ABCDF GRADED STUDENTS

AT U. T. AUSTIN

Item	Faculty Ratings Disagree 1	2	3	4	5	6	Agree 7	Total	Mean	S.D.	Administrator Ratings Disagree 1	2	3	4	5	6	Agree 7	Total	Mean	S.D.
Students who take my class on a pass-fail option basis are less likely to attend class than those students who are taking it on an ABCDF basis.	24 11%	30 14%	20 9%	67 31%	33 15%	28 13%	13 6%	215 99%[a]	3.39	1.69	.. ..	2 7%	1 4%	10 36%	7 25%	3 11%	5 18%	28 101%[a]	4.82	1.39

[a] Differs from 100% only because of rounding errors.

Table 18

COMPARISON OF DISTRIBUTION OF STUDENT REPORTED MIDTERM GRADE AVERAGES FOR PASS-FAIL VERSUS ABCDF GRADED STUDENTS

Respondent Group	A+ / A	A- / B+	B / B-	C+ / C	C- / D+	D / D-	F	Total	Mean (13-Point Scale)	S.D.
Pass-Fail Registrants In 27 Selected Classes[b] (N=195)	35 22%	24 15%	43 27%	39 25%	9 6%	4 3%	4 3%	158 101%[a]	8.59 (B-)	2.81
ABCDF Registrants In 27 Selected Classes[c] (N=674)	123 21%	139 24%	156 27%	96 16%	30 5%	33 6%	7 1%	584 100%	8.85 (B-)	2.84
Total Registrants In 27 Selected Classes (N=869)	158 21%	163 22%	199 27%	135 18%	39 5%	37 5%	11 1%	742 99%[a]	8.79 (B-)	2.83

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[a] Differs from 100% only because of rounding errors.

[b] These students should not be confused with the category of "Pass-Fail Students" found in a number of other tables in this report. In contrast to this latter group, which includes all subjects in the student sample who have ever had pass-fail experience in some course at U.T. Austin, the category listed here is a subset restricted to those students currently enrolled in the 27 target classes surveyed.

[c] These students should not be confused with the category of "ABCDF Students" found in a number of other tables in this report. In contrast to this latter group, which is restricted to those subjects in the student sample who have never taken a course at U.T. Austin on a pass-fail basis, the category listed here is a more inclusive group composed of those subjects who are currently enrolled in one of the 27 target classes on the ABCDF basis. Some of this group have had pass-fail experience in other courses at U.T. Austin.

Table 19

COMPARISON OF DEGREE OF SATISFACTION WITH TARGET COURSE BY PASS-FAIL VERSUS ABCDF GRADED REGISTRANTS

IN 27 SELECTED CLASSES

Respondent Group	Degree Of Satisfaction With Course							Total	Mean	S. D.
	Very Satisfactory 1	2	3	4	5	6	Very Satisfactory 7			
Pass-Fail Registrants In 27 Selected Classes[a] (N=195)	10 5%	5 3%	14 7%	19 10%	39 20%	48 25%	59 30%	194 100%	5.33	1.67
ABCDF Registrants In 27 Selected Classes[b] (N=674)	29 4%	39 6%	44 7%	74 11%	137 21%	160 24%	177 27%	660 100%	5.18	1.70
Total Registrants In 27 Selected Classes (N=869)	39 5%	44 5%	58 7%	93 11%	176 21%	208 24%	236 28%	854 101%[c]	5.21	1.70

[a] These students should not be confused with the category of "Pass-Fail Students" found in a number of other tables in this report. In contrast to this latter group, which includes all subjects in the student sample who have ever had pass-fail experience in some course at U. T. Austin, the category listed here is a subset restricted to those students currently enrolled in the 27 target classes surveyed.

[b] These students should not be confused with the category of "ABCDF Students" found in a number of other tables in this report. In contrast to this latter group, which is restricted to those subjects in the student sample who have never taken a course at U. T. Austin on a pass-fail basis, the category listed here is a more inclusive group composed of those subjects who are currently enrolled in one of the 27 target classes on the ABCDF basis. Some of this group have had pass-fail experience in other courses at U. T. Austin.

[c] Differs from 100% only because of rounding errors.

Table 20

STUDENT REACTIONS TO POSSIBLE CHANGES IN THE CURRENT UNDERGRADUATE PASS-FAIL OPTION SYSTEM AT U.T. AUSTIN

Possible Options[a]	Total	Degree Of Opposition Or Support Revealed By Total Sample (N=869)							Total Sample (N=869)		P-F Sample (N=403)		ABCDF Sample (N=458)	
		Strongly Oppose 1	2	3	4	5	6	Strongly Support 7						
Require instructors to advise undergraduate students taking their courses on a pass-fail option basis at the outset what the minimum competence standards for passing the course will be.	852 101%[b]	16 2%	7 1%	14 2%	44 5%	56 7%	173 20%	542 64%	N Mean S.D.	852 6.29 1.25	N Mean S.D.	396 6.32 1.26	N Mean S.D.	451 6.26 1.25
Extend until the end of the semester the point at which an undergraduate student can change from Pass-Fail status to ABCDF status.	852 100%	78 9%	40 5%	45 5%	49 6%	87 10%	155 18%	398 47%	N Mean S.D.	852 5.45 2.00	N Mean S.D.	395 5.87 1.82	N Mean S.D.	451 5.07 2.09
Extend until the end of the semester the point at which an undergraduate student can change from ABCDF status to Pass-Fail status.	850 100%	102 12%	78 9%	47 6%	59 7%	89 10%	130 15%	345 41%	N Mean S.D.	850 5.03 2.19	N Mean S.D.	395 5.25 2.14	N Mean S.D.	449 4.82 2.23
Permit either Pass-Fail grading or ABCDF grading in all undergraduate courses that now use only pass-fail grading.	840 100%	38 5%	36 4%	32 4%	245 29%	129 15%	151 18%	209 25%	N Mean S.D.	840 5.00 1.65	N Mean S.D.	385 4.92 1.68	N Mean S.D.	448 5.08 1.61
For each undergraduate course taken on a p-f option basis, have the Registrar also record in a special file the appropriate ABCDF letter grade earned by the student, and permit the ABCDF letter grade to be retrieved and reported at the student's request.	854 101%[b]	114 13%	56 7%	35 4%	103 12%	90 11%	176 21%	280 33%	N Mean S.D.	854 4.93 2.13	N Mean S.D.	398 4.85 2.25	N Mean S.D.	451 5.00 2.01

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Table 20 (Continued)

STUDENT REACTIONS TO POSSIBLE CHANGES IN THE CURRENT UNDERGRADUATE PASS-FAIL OPTION SYSTEM AT U.T. AUSTIN

Possible Options[a]	Total	Degree Of Opposition Or Support Revealed By Total Sample (N=869)							Total Sample (N=869)	P-F Sample (N=403)	ABCDF Sample (N=458)
		Strongly Oppose 1	2	3	4	5	6	Strongly Support 7			
Assure that professors have no knowledge of which undergraduate students are taking their courses on a p-f basis and which are taking it on an ABCDF basis. The professor would turn in ABCDF grades for all students and the appropriate course grade would be recorded by the Registrar.	847 100%	97 11%	68 8%	64 8%	154 18%	103 12%	152 18%	209 25%	N 847 Mean 4.64 S.D. 2.02	N 394 Mean 4.43 S.D. 2.11	N 448 Mean 4.83 S.D. 1.92
Do not use a failing grade received in an undergraduate course taken on a p-f option basis in calculating grade-point average.	848 99%[b]	144 17 %	98 12%	69 8%	104 12%	55 6%	104 12%	274 32%	N 848 Mean 4.46 S.D. 2.31	N 394 Mean 4.71 S.D. 2.32	N 448 Mean 4.23 S.D. 2.28
Permit undergraduate students to take as many courses as they wish on a p-f option basis, as long as they have met the course prerequisites.	852 100%	112 13%	92 11%	108 13%	88 10%	104 12%	142 17%	206 24%	N 852 Mean 4.44 S.D. 2.12	N 394 Mean 4.55 S.D. 2.11	N 452 Mean 4.34 S.D. 2.14
Leave it as it is	819 100%	91 11%	75 9%	101 12%	202 25%	108 13%	127 16%	115 14%	N. 819 Mean 4.22 S.D. 1.86	N 376 Mean 4.42 S.D. 1.99	N 440 Mean 4.05 S.D. 1.71
Extend the eligibility to take courses on a pass-fail option basis to freshmen	848 99%[b]	167 20%	89 10%	69 8%	128 15%	97 11%	114 13%	184 22%	N 848 Mean 4.15 S.D. 2.20	N 392 Mean 4.33 S.D. 2.20	N 450 Mean 3.98 S.D. 2.19

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Table 20 (Continued)

STUDENT REACTIONS TO POSSIBLE CHANGES IN THE CURRENT UNDERGRADUATE PASS-FAIL OPTION SYSTEM AT U.T. AUSTIN

Possible Options[a]	Total	Degree Of Opposition Or Support Revealed By Total Sample (N=869)							Total Sample (N=869)	P-F Sample (N=403)	ABCDF Sample (N=458)
		Strongly Oppose 1	2	3	4	5	6	Strongly Support 7			
Permit each College or School within the University to set its own regulations about the undergraduate pass-fail option	845 100%	224 27%	93 11%	75 9%	139 16%	94 11%	125 15%	95 11%	N 845 Mean 3.64 S.D. 2.12	N 389 Mean 3.35 S.D. 2.14	N 451 Mean 3.89 S.D. 2.08
Require an undergraduate student to do at least C (as opposed to D) work in a course in order to receive a "pass" when taking a course on a p-f option basis.	855 100%	235 27%	111 13%	85 10%	93 11%	111 13%	100 12%	120 14%	N 855 Mean 3.60 S.D. 2.19	N 397 Mean 3.24 S.D. 2.09	N 452 Mean 3.92 S.D. 2.23
Restrict it to courses outside one's major department.	844 100%	234 28%	112 13%	93 11%	87 10%	100 12%	93 11%	125 15%	N 844 Mean 3.58 S.D. 2.20	N 393 Mean 3.48 S.D. 2.22	N 446 Mean 3.65 S.D. 2.19
Require undergraduate students to have a specified minimum cumulative grade-point average before they may take a course on a p-f option basis.	857 101%[b]	199 23%	136 16%	109 13%	118 14%	139 16%	91 11%	65 8%	N 857 Mean 3.46 S.D. 1.96	N 398 Mean 3.22 S.D. 1.92	N 452 Mean 3.66 S.D. 1.97
Leave the matter of whether or not a student may take a particular undergraduate course on a p-f option basis to the discretion of the professor involved.	844 100%	252 30%	186 22%	136 16%	122 14%	60 7%	50 6%	38 5%	N 844 Mean 2.83 S.D. 1.75	N 391 Mean 2.68 S.D. 1.77	N 448 Mean 2.95 S.D. 1.73
Restrict it to courses outside one's major department and outside of Area Requirements.	845 100%	350 41%	179 21%	92 11%	91 11%	55 7%	35 4%	43 5%	N 845 Mean 2.53 S.D. 1.79	N 390 Mean 2.30 S.D. 1.70	N 450 Mean 2.72 S.D. 1.84

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Table 20 (Continued)

STUDENT REACTIONS TO POSSIBLE CHANGES IN THE CURRENT UNDERGRADUATE PASS-FAIL OPTION SYSTEM AT U.T. AUSTIN

Possible Options[a]	Total	Degree Of Opposition Or Support Revealed By Total Sample (N=869)							Total Sample (N=869)		P-F Sample (N=403)		ABCDF Sample (N=458)	
		Strongly Oppose 1	2	3	4	5	6	Strongly Support 7						
The undergraduate student should decide when he/she registers for a course whether he/she will take it on a p-f option basis and should not be permitted to change later.	848 100%	407 48%	166 20%	66 8%	72 8%	39 5%	44 5%	54 6%	N Mean S.D.	848 2.43 1.88	N Mean S.D.	393 2.02 1.60	N Mean S.D.	450 2.80 2.03
Restrict it to courses outside one's major department and outside of Area and College Requirements.	845 99%[b]	403 48%	170 20%	94 11%	96 11%	37 4%	19 2%	26 3%	N Mean S.D.	845 2.24 1.58	N Mean S.D.	390 1.97 1.43	N Mean S.D.	450 2.47 1.67
Abolish the undergraduate pass-fail option completely.	844 100%	657 78%	79 9%	34 4%	45 5%	6 1%	8 1%	15 2%	N Mean S.D.	844 1.52 1.21	N Mean S.D.	390 1.24 0.92	N Mean S.D.	449 1.76 1.37

[a] Possible options are listed in descending order of mean rating.

[b] Differs from 100% only because of rounding errors.

Table 21

FACULTY REACTIONS TO POSSIBLE CHANGES IN THE CURRENT UNDERGRADUATE PASS-FAIL OPTION SYSTEM

AT U.T. AUSTIN

Possible Options[a]	Degree of Opposition or Support Revealed by Faculty Sample (N=269)									
	Strongly Oppose 1	2	3	4	5	6	Strongly Support 7	Total	Mean	S.D.
Require instructors to advise undergraduate students taking their courses on a pass-fail option basis at the out-set what the minimum competence standards for passing that course will be.	17 6%	4 2%	5 2%	14 5%	17 6%	46 18%	159 61%	262 100%	5.99	1.71
Require an undergraduate student to do at least C (as opposed to D) work in a course in order to receive a "pass" when taking a course on a pass-fail option basis.	15 6%	16 6%	17 6%	15 6%	34 13%	56 21%	113 42%	266 100%	5.47	1.86
Restrict it to courses outside one's major department.	25 10%	23 9%	23 9%	20 8%	30 12%	57 22%	82 32%	260 102%[b]	4.95	2.06
Permit either pass-fail grading or ABCDF grading in all undergraduate courses that now use only pass-fail grading.	26 10%	5 2%	10 4%	79 31%	42 17%	47 19%	42 17%	251 100%	4.65	1.75
The undergraduate student should decide when he/she registers for a course whether he/she will take it on a pass-fail option basis and should not be permitted to change later.	46 18%	30 11%	22 8%	22 8%	22 8%	41 16%	78 30%	261 99%[b]	4.45	2.31
Assure that professors have no knowledge of which undergraduate students are taking their courses on a pass-fail basis and which students are taking it on an ABCDF basis. The professor would turn in ABCDF grades for all students, and the appropriate course grade would be recorded by the Registrar.	39 15%	32 12%	15 6%	38 15%	30 12%	41 16%	65 25%	260 101%[b]	4.43	2.17

Go to the next page.

Table 21 (Continued)

FACULTY REACTIONS TO POSSIBLE CHANGES IN THE CURRENT UNDERGRADUATE PASS-FAIL OPTION SYSTEM

AT U.T. AUSTIN

Possible Options[a]	Degree of Opposition or Support Revealed by Faculty Sample (N=269)									
	Strongly Oppose 1	2	3	4	5	6	Strongly Support 7	Total	Mean	S.D.
Require undergraduate students to have a specified minimimum cumulative grade point average before they may take a course on a pass-fail option basis.	28 11%	29 11%	26 10%	53 20%	40 15%	46 18%	39 15%	261 100%	4.31	1.91
Restrict it to courses outside one's major department and outside of Area Requirements.	29 11%	37 14%	28 11%	38 15%	36 14%	47 18%	46 18%	291 101%[b]	4.30	2.01
Restrict it to courses outside one's major department and outside of Area and College Requirements.	36 14%	35 14%	28 11%	50 20%	34 13%	26 10%	44 17%	253 99%[b]	4.05	2.01
Leave it as it is.	25 10%	24 9%	34 13%	81 32%	34 13%	40 16%	15 6%	253 99%[b]	4.01	1.64
Permit each College or School within the University to set its own regulations about the undergraduate pass-fail option.	68 26%	20 8%	24 9%	37 14%	25 10%	35 13%	51 20%	260 100%	3.92	2.27
For each undergraduate course taken on a pass-fail option basis, have the Registrar also record in a special file the appropriate ABCDF letter grade earned by the student, and permit the ABCDF letter grade to be retrieved and reported at the student's request (for example, for graduate school admissions or for employment purposes.)	70 27%	39 15%	15 6%	24 9%	34 13%	39 15%	40 15%	261 100%	3.73	2.26
Extend the eligibility to take courses on a pass-fail option basis to freshmen.	78 30%	45 17%	22 8%	29 11%	35 13%	33 13%	20 8%	262 100%	3.29	2.07

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Table 21 (Continued)

FACULTY REACTIONS TO POSSIBLE CHANGES IN THE CURRENT UNDERGRADUATE PASS-FAIL OPTION SYSTEM

AT U.T. AUSTIN

Possible Options	Degree of Opposition or Support Revealed by Faculty Sample (N=269)									
	Strongly Oppose 1	2	3	4	5	6	Strongly Support 7	Total	Mean	S.D.
Extend until the end of the semester the point at which an undergraduate student can change from Pass-Fail status to ABCDF status.	108 41%	34 13%	20 8%	11 4%	18 7%	33 13%	39 15%	263 101%[b]	3.20	2.36
Leave the matter of whether or not a student may take a particular undergraduate course on a pass-fail option basis to the discretion of the professor involved.	75 29%	42 16%	40 15%	35 13%	28 11%	28 11%	15 6%	263 101%[b]	3.16	1.92
Permit undergraduate students to take as many courses as they wish on a pass-fail option basis, as long as they have met the course prerequisites.	116 45%	46 18%	22 9%	21 8%	18 7%	16 6%	19 7%	258 100%	2.62	1.98
Do not use a failing grade received in an undergraduate course taken on a pass-fail option basis in calculating grade-point average.	131 50%	43 16%	13 5%	31 12%	17 6%	14 5%	13 5%	262 99%[b]	2.44	1.87
Abolish the undergraduate pass-fail option completely.	126 48%	42 16%	32 12%	22 8%	16 6%	8 3%	15 6%	261 99%[b]	2.40	1.81
Extend until the end of the semester the point at which an undergraduate student can change from ABCDF status to Pass-Fail status.	145 55%	43 16%	20 8%	11 4%	12 5%	13 5%	19 7%	263 100%	2.30	1.93

[a] Possible options are listed in descending order of mean rating.
[b] Differs from 100% only because of rounding errors.

Table 22

ADMINISTRATOR REACTIONS TO POSSIBLE CHANGES IN THE CURRENT UNDERGRADUATE PASS-FAIL OPTION SYSTEM AT U.T. AUSTIN

Possible Options[a]	Degree of Opposition or Support Revealed by Administrator Sample (N=35)							Total	Mean	S.D.
	Strongly Oppose 1	2	3	4	5	6	Strongly Support 7			
Require instructors to advise undergraduate students taking their courses on a pass-fail option basis at the outset what the minimum competence standards for passing that course will be.	.. ..	.. ..	.. ..	1 3%	1 3%	7 21%	24 73%	33 100%	6.64	.69
Require an undergraduate student to do at least C (as opposed to D) work in a course in order to receive a "pass" when taking a course on a pass-fail option basis.	3 9%	1 3%	1 3%	2 6%	7 21%	9 27%	10 30%	33 99%[b]	5.30	1.82
Restrict it to courses outside one's major department and outside of Area Requirements.	1 3%	3 9%	4 11%	5 14%	1 3%	9 26%	12 34%	35 100%	5.20	1.85
Restrict it to courses outside one's major department.	3 9%	2 6%	5 14%	4 11%	.. ..	8 23%	13 37%	35 100%	5.06	2.07
Assure that professors have no knowledge of which undergraduate students are taking their courses on a pass-fail basis and which students are taking it on an ABCDF basis. The professor would turn in ABCDF grades for all students, and the appropriate course grade would be recorded by the Registrar.	3 9%	2 6%	1 3%	6 18%	4 12%	9 27%	8 24%	33 99%[b]	4.97	1.88

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Table 22 (Continued)

ADMINISTRATOR REACTIONS TO POSSIBLE CHANGES IN THE CURRENT UNDERGRADUATE

PASS-FAIL OPTION SYSTEM AT U.T. AUSTIN

Possible Options[a]	Degree of Opposition or Support Revealed by Administrator Sample (N=35)							Total	Mean	S.D.
	Strongly Oppose 1	2	3	4	5	6	Strongly Support 7			
The undergraduate student should decide when he/she registers for a course whether he/she will take it on a pass-fail option basis and should not be permitted to change later.	6 18%	2 6%	1 3%	3 9%	5 15%	5 15%	12 35%	34 101%[b]	4.82	2.26
Restrict it to courses outside one's major department and outside of Area and College Requirements.	3 9%	3 9%	3 9%	7 20%	3 9%	8 23%	8 23%	35 102%[b]	4.71	1.94
Permit either pass-fail grading or ABCDF grading in all undergraduate courses that now use only pass-fail grading.	5 16%	3 9%	2 6%	11 34%	3 9%	6 19%	2 6%	32 99%[b]	3.94	1.80
Require undergraduate students to have a specified minimum cumulative gradepoint average before they may take a course on a pass-fail option basis.	5 15%	4 12%	4 12%	6 18%	8 24%	3 9%	3 9%	33 99%[b]	3.88	1.84
For each undergraduate course taken on a pass-fail option basis, have the Registrar also record in a special file the appropriate ABCDF letter grade earned by the student, and permit the ABCDF letter grade to be retrieved and reported at the student's request (for example, for graduate school admissions or for employment purposes.)	7 21%	6 18%	1 3%	3 9%	6 18%	9 27%	1 3%	33 99%[b]	3.79	2.04

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Table 22 (Continued)

ADMINISTRATOR REACTIONS TO POSSIBLE CHANGES IN THE CURRENT UNDERGRADUATE

PASS-FAIL OPTION SYSTEM AT U.T. AUSTIN

Possible Options[a]	Degree of Opposition or Support Revealed by Administrator Sample (N=35)							Total	Mean	S.D.
	Strongly Oppose 1	2	3	4	5	6	Strongly Support 7			
Abolish the undergraduate pass-fail option completely.	11 32%	3 9%	5 15%	4 12%	4 12%	.. ..	7 21%	34 101%[b]	3.44	2.25
Permit each College or School within the University to set its own regulations about the undergraduate pass-fail option.	12 34%	5 14%	2 6%	3 9%	5 14%	3 9%	5 14%	35 100%	3.37	2.26
Leave it as it is.	8 24%	5 15%	6 18%	6 18%	6 18%	2 6%	1 3%	34 102%[b]	3.21	1.71
Extend the eligibility to take courses on a pass-fail option basis to freshmen.	12 36%	3 9%	5 15%	6 18%	1 3%	3 9%	3 9%	33 100%	3.06	2.03
Leave the matter of whether or not a student may take a particular undergraduate course on a pass-fail option basis to the discretion of the professor involved.	18 55%	8 24%	3 9%	.. ..	2 6%	.. ..	2 6%	33 100%	2.03	1.64
Do not use a failing grade received in an undergraduate course taken on a pass-fail option basis in calculating gradepoint average.	20 61%	6 18%	2 6%	1 3%	2 6%	.. ..	2 6%	33 100%	2.00	1.69
Permit undergraduate students to take as many courses as they wish on a pass-fail option basis, as long as they have met the course prerequisites.	25 71%	2 6%	3 9%	1 3%	2 6%	1 3%	1 3%	35 101%[b]	1.86	1.61

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Table 22 (Continued)

ADMINISTRATOR REACTIONS TO POSSIBLE CHANGES IN THE CURRENT UNDERGRADUATE PASS-FAIL OPTION SYSTEM AT U.T. AUSTIN

Possible Options[a]	Degree of Opposition or Support Revealed by Administrator Sample (N=35)							Total	Mean	S.D.
	Strongly Oppose 1	2	3	4	5	6	Strongly Support 7			
Extend until the end of the semester the point at which an undergraduate student can change from ABCDF status to Pass-Fail status.	24 69%	7 20%	.. ..	.. ..	2 6%	.. ..	2 6%	35 101%[b]	1.77	1.61
Extend until the end of the semester the point at which an undergraduate student can change from Pass-Fail to ABCDF status.	23 66%	8 23%	2 6%	1 3%	.. ..	.. ..	1 3%	35 101%[b]	1.60	1.18

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[a] Possible options are listed in descending order of mean rating.

[b] Differs from 100% only because of rounding errors.

Table 23

DEGREE TO WHICH STUDENT, FACULTY, AND ADMINISTRATOR SAMPLES FELT INFORMED ABOUT THE U.T. AUSTIN PASS-FAIL OPTION SYSTEM OF GRADING

Respondent Group	Degree To Which Respondents Felt Informed: Not At All 1	2	3	4	5	6	Very Well 7	Total	Mean	S. D.
Pass-Fail Sample (N=403)	8 2%	25 6%	36 9%	42 11%	104 27%	108 28%	67 17%	390 100%	5.05	1.53
ABCDF Sample (N=458)	63 14%	96 22%	79 18%	38 9%	81 18%	64 14%	25 6%	446 101%[a]	3.61	1.85
No Information Student Sample (N=8)	1 17%	1 17%	1 17%	1 17%	.. ..	1 17%	1 17%	6 102%[a]	3.83	2.11
Total Student Sample (N=869)	72 9%	122 14%	116 14%	81 10%	185 22%	173 21%	93 11%	842 101%[a]	4.28	1.86
Faculty Sample (N=269)	14 5%	37 14%	38 14%	33 13%	55 21%	67 25%	19 7%	263 99%[a]	4.35	1.71
Administrator Sample (N=35)	1 3%	2 6%	3 9%	2 6%	4 11%	9 26%	14 40%	35 101%[a]	5.54	1.71

[a] Differs from 100% only because of rounding errors.

Table 24

STUDENT EVALUATION OF ADMINISTRATIVE PROCEDURES RELATED TO THE PASS-FAIL OPTION SYSTEM

AT U. T. AUSTIN

Respondent Group	Beliefs About Administrative Procedures	Ratings Reported By The Student Sample							Total	Means	S.D.
		Not At All 1	2	3	4	5	6	To Great Extent 7			
P-F Sample (N=403)	To what extent have the administrative procedures necessary for pass-fail registration been an inconvenience for you?	158 42%	46 12%	14 4%	29 8%	47 13%	47 13%	32 9%	373 101%[a]	3.08	2.21
ABCDF Sample (N=458)	To what extent have the administrative procedures served as a deterrent to your taking a course on a pass-fail option basis?	121 29%	24 6%	11 3%	58 14%	52 13%	49 12%	99 24%	414 101%[a]	4.06	2.37

[a] Differs from 100% only because of rounding errors.

Table 25

FACULTY EVALUATION OF ADMINISTRATIVE PROCEDURES RELATED TO THE PASS-FAIL OPTION SYSTEM AT U. T. AUSTIN

Beliefs About Administrative Procedure	Ratings Reported By Faculty Sample (N=269)							Total	Mean	S.D.
	Not At All 1	2	3	4	5	6	To Great Extent 7			
To what extent have administrative procedures necessary for pass-fail registration seemed an inconvenience to those students known to you?	87 37%	33 14%	13 6%	60 26%	21 9%	10 4%	8 3%	232 99%[a]	2.81	. 1.78
To what extent have administrative procedures served as a deterrent to your having taught a course available on a pass-fail option basis?	168 68%	20 8%	3 1%	40 16%	2 1%	7 3%	6 2%	246 99%[a]	1.91	1.57

[a] Differs from 100% only because of rounding errors.

Table 26

ADMINISTRATOR EVALUATION OF ADMINISTRATIVE PROCEDURES RELATED TO THE PASS-FAIL OPTION SYSTEM AT U. T. AUSTIN

Beliefs About Administrative Procedures	Ratings Reported By Administrative Sample (N=35)							Total	Mean	S.D.
	Not At All 1	2	3	4	5	6	To Great Extent 7			
To what extent have the administrative procedures necessary for pass-fail registration been an inconvenience to students known to you?	3 10%	2 6%	3 10%	9 29%	6 19%	2 6%	6 19%	31 99%[a]	4.39	1.81
To what extent have the administrative procedures served as a deterrent to your teaching a course available on a pass-fail option basis?	15 54%	2 7%	1 4%	6 21%	2 7%	2 7%	.. ..	28 100%	2.43	1.74

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[a] Differs from 100% only because of rounding errors.

Table 27

STUDENT PERCEPTIONS OF ADMINISTRATIVE CONSIDERATIONS WITH RESPECT TO IMPLEMENTATION OF THE PASS-FAIL OPTION SYSTEM

Items	Ratings Reported By Student Sample (N=869)							Total	Mean	S.D.
	Strongly Disagree 1	2	3	4	5	6	Strongly Agree 7			
Administrative considerations appear to be given greater weight at U. T. Austin in determining undergraduate pass-fail option policies than student preferences.	15 2%	14 2%	17 2%	165 20%	122 15%	201 24%	296 36%	830 101%[a]	5.59	1.43
Administrative considerations appear to be given greater weight at U. T. Austin in determining undergraduate pass-fail option policies than faculty preferences.	12 1%	20 2%	39 5%	315 38%	142 17%	143 17%	152 18%	823 98%[a]	4.93	1.39
U. T. Austin faculty are less willing to spend time with an undergraduate student taking a course on a pass-fail option basis than with a classmate taking the course on an ABCDF basis.	146 18%	114 14%	78 9%	334 40%	73 9%	48 6%	33 4%	826 100%	3.42	1.61
A U. T. Austin faculty member is likely to lower his/her standards for a minimally passing grade for an undergraduate student taking his/her course on a pass-fail basis.	118 14	127 15%	110 13%	302 36%	101 12%	46 6%	25 3%	829 99%[a]	3.46	1.53

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[a] Differs from 100% only because of rounding errors.

Table 28

FACULTY PERCEPTIONS OF ADMINISTRATIVE CONSIDERATIONS WITH RESPECT TO IMPLEMENTATION OF THE PASS-FAIL OPTION SYSTEM

Items	Degree of Opposition or Support Reported by Total Faculty Sample (N=269)							Total	Mean	S.D.
	Strongly Disagree 1	2	3	4	5	6	Strongly Agree 7			
Administrative considerations appear to be given greater weight at U.T. Austin in determining undergraduate P-F option policies than student preferences.	23 10%	29 12%	10 4%	102 43%	20 8%	25 10%	30 13%	239 100%	4.10	1.74
Administrative considerations appear to be given greater weight at U.T. Austin in determining undergraduate P-F option policies than faculty preferences.	25 10%	28 12%	11 5%	100 41%	25 10%	27 11%	25 10%	241 99%[a]	4.05	1.71
U.T. Austin faculty are less willing to spend time with an undergraduate student taking a course on a P-F option basis than with another taking the course on an ABCDF grading basis.	105 41%	38 15%	15 6%	65 25%	20 8%	9 4%	3 1%	255 100%	2.59	1.64
A U.T. Austin faculty member is likely to lower his standards for a minimally passing grade for an undergraduate student taking his course on a P-F option basis.	51 20%	43 17%	26 10%	42 16%	49 19%	21 8%	23 9%	255 99%[a]	3.59	1.93

[a] Differs from 100% only because of rounding errors.

Table 29

ADMINISTRATOR PERCEPTIONS OF ADMINISTRATIVE CONSIDERATIONS WITH RESPECT TO IMPLEMENTATION OF THE PASS-FAIL OPTION SYSTEM

Items	Ratings Reported By Administrator Sample (N=35)							Total	Mean	S.D.
	Strongly Disagree 1	2	3	4	5	Strongly Agree 6	7			
Administrative considerations appear to be given greater weight at U.T. Austin in determining undergraduate pass-fail option policies than student preferences.	5 16%	.. ..	6 19%	8 25%	1 3%	8 25%	4 13%	32 101%[a]	4.25	1.92
Administrative considerations appear to be given greater weight at U.T. Austin in determining undergraduate pass-fail option policies than faculty preferences.	5 16%	4 13%	7 22%	7 22%	6 19%	1 3%	2 6%	32 101%[a]	3.50	1.66
U.T. Austin faculty are less willing to spend time with an undergraduate student taking a course on a pass-fail option basis than with another student taking the course on an ABCDF grade basis.	5 15%	8 24%	1 3%	8 24%	7 21%	3 9%	1 3%	33 99%[a]	3.52	1.73
A U.T. Austin faculty member is likely to lower his standards for a minimally passing grade for an undergraduate student taking his course on a pass-fail option basis.	2 6%	2 6%	4 12%	3 9%	9 27%	9 27%	4 12%	33 99%[a]	4.76	1.67
Administrative considerations should be given greater weight at U.T. Austin in determining undergraduate pass-fail option policies than student preferences.	9 27%	4 12%	4 12%	6 18%	2 6%	4 12%	4 12%	33 99%[a]	3.48	2.11
Administrative considerations should be given greater weight at U.T. Austin in determining undergraduate pass-fail option policies than faculty preferences.	9 26%	3 9%	8 24%	7 21%	5 15%	2 6%	.. ..	34 101%[a]	3.06	1.57

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[a] Differs from 100% only because of rounding errors.

Table 30

ADMINISTRATOR EVALUATION OF THE DIFFICULTY INVOLVED IN THE ADMINISTRATION OF THE CURRENT PASS-FAIL OPTION SYSTEM

Items	Ratings Reported By Administrator Sample (N=35)							Total	Mean	S. D.
	Not At All Difficult 1	2	3	4	5	6	Extremely Difficult 7			
How difficult do you find the administration of the current pass-fail registration procedures?	8 24%	7 21%	1 3%	5 15%	2 6%	6 18%	5 15%	34 102%[a]	3.71	2.23
How difficult do you find the administration of the current pass-fail special paperwork involved?	7 22%	6 19%	1 3%	6 19%	3 9%	6 19%	3 9%	32 100%	3.69	2.08

[a] Differs from 100% only because of rounding errors.

Table 31

ADMINISTRATOR EVALUATION OF STRICTNESS WITH WHICH THEY ADHERE TO ENFORCEMENT

OF RULES ABOUT PASS-FAIL OPTION SYSTEM

(N=35)

Applicable College(s) Or School(s)	Rule	Rarely (1-15% of the time)	Sometimes (16-35% of the time)	Frequently (36-65% of the time)	Generally (66-86% of the time)	Almost Always (87-99% of the time)	Total
All Colleges and Schools	(a) Students must state their intentions to register for a course on a pass-fail basis by the end of the official date for adding courses and changing sections.	2 7%	3 11%	1 4%	4 15%	17 63%	27 100%
All College and Schools	(b) Students must have received 30 semester hours of college credit before taking a course on a pass-fail option basis.	.. ..	2 8%	.. ..	2 8%	21 84%	25 100%
All Colleges and Schools	(c) Students may not elect to take more than two courses a semester on a pass-fail option basis.	.. ..	2 8%	.. ..	1 4%	23 88%	26 100%
All Colleges and Schools	(d) The department concerned must decide whether a course taken on a pass-fail basis may be counted as a part of the student's major requirements.	4 15%	.. ..	.. ..	2 8%	20 77%	26 100%
All Colleges and Schools	(e) Advanced standing examinations on a pass-fail basis be permitted in required subjects; these courses would not be counted as part of the number of courses a student may elect to take on a pass-fail option.	4 17%	2 8%	.. ..	3 13%	15 63%	24 101% a

Go to the next page.

Table 31 (Continued)

ADMINISTRATOR EVALUATION OF STRICTNESS WITH WHICH THEY ADHERE TO ENFORCEMENT

OF RULES ABOUT PASS-FAIL OPTION SYSTEM

(N=35)

Applicable College(s) Or School(s)	Rule	Rarely (1-15% of the time)	Sometimes (16-35% of the time)	Frequently (36-65% of the time)	Generally (66-86% of the time)	Almost Always (87-99% of the time)	Total
Colleges or Bus.Adm., Educ.,Engr.,Fine Arts, Schools of Communic., Pharmacy & Arch.	(f) Undergraduate students may take not more than five semester courses in elective subjects outside their major area on a pass-fail option basis as part of the hours required for their degree.	.. ..	1 6%	.. ..	2 13%	13 81%	16 100%
Colleges of Humanities Nat'l Sci.,Soc. & Behv. Sci., & Div. of Gen'l & Comparative Studies	(g) Students may take one or two courses in their major on a pass-fail option basis with the approval of the major department; these courses count in the total allowance of sixteen semester hours.	.. ..	.. ..	.. ..	2 20%	8 30%	10 100%
Colleges of Humanities Nat'l Sci.,Soc. & Behv. Sci., & Div. of Gen'l & Comparative Studies	(h) Students may take up to sixteen semester hours in elective courses on a pass-fail option basis.	.. ..	.. ..	.. ..	2 20%	8 80%	10 100%
Division of General and Comparative Studies	(i) Students in Plan II may take up to nineteen semester hours of required or elective courses on a pass-fail basis. Only two courses a semester may be taken on that basis, and only Tutorial Course 301 may be taken on that basis before the student has accumulated 30 semester hours.	.. ..	.. ..	.. ..	2 50%	2 50%	4 100%

Go to the next page.

Table 31 (Continued)

ADMINISTRATOR EVALUATION OF STRICTNESS WITH WHICH THEY ADHERE TO ENFORCEMENT

OF RULES ABOUT PASS-FAIL OPTION SYSTEM

(N=35)

Applicable College(s) Or School(s)	Rule	Rarely (1-15% of the time)	Sometimes (16-35% of the time)	Frequently (36-65% of the time)	Generally (66-85% of the time)	Almost Always (86-99% of the time)	Total
Colleges of Natural Sciences and Humanities	(j) No courses to satisfy area requirements may be taken on a pass-fail basis.	.. ..	.. ..	.. ..	3 60%	2 40%	5 100%
School of Communications	(k) No course required for the degree may be taken on a pass-fail basis.	.. ..	.. ..	.. ..	1 20%	4 80%	5 100%
College of Engineering	(l) At the option of the student and with the approval of a dean, a student may elect to take any electives or any extra courses (taken for his own benefit and not counted towards his degree) on a pass-fail basis. All other degree-required courses must be taken on an ABCDF grading basis. Course credit earned by advance placement or advanced standing examination will be allowed either under the pass-fail or ABCDF basis of grading.	.. ..	.. ..	.. ..	1 17%	5 83%	6 100%

[a] Differs from 100% only because of rounding errors.

Appendix A

STUDENT PASS-FAIL OPTION QUESTIONNAIRE

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STUDENT PASS-FAIL OPTION QUESTIONNAIRE

The University of Texas at Austin

Orientation: During the past year considerable discussion has focused on the undergraduate Pass-Fail Option system of grading at U.T. Austin and its possible revision. Students, faculty, and administrators are agreed that insufficient data are available on which to base reasonable decisions about the desirability of change. Hence, carefully selected representative samples of all three groups are being asked to participate in this important survey. Your responses will help to provide an adequate data base that will be used in formulating future policies concerning the undergraduate Pass-Fail Option. Your opinions will count! Please help us by completing the attached questionnaire. Thank you.

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STUDENT PASS-FAIL OPTION QUESTIONNAIRE

Directions: The questions listed below refer to the elective pass-fail system (pass-fail option) at The University of Texas at Austin as presently available to sophomore, junior, and senior students. If your experience with pass-fail courses has been at another collegiate institution, or if you are familiar with the pass-fail system at the graduate level, or if you have taken required undergraduate courses available only on a pass-fail basis, disregard those experiences. We want to get your impressions as they pertain to undergraduate students at U.T. Austin who elect to take certain courses on a pass-fail option basis. Respond to all appropriate questions even if you are not entirely sure of your answer. Usually, your first response is the best one.

Please note that the term "ABCDF grading" is used throughout this questionnaire and refers to the traditional system of letter grading.

1. Write the name and number of the course in which you are completing this questionnaire:

____
name of course

____
number of course (e.g., Psych. 301)

____
unique number of course

2. Are you taking this course on a Pass-Fail basis?

(1) ____ Yes

(2) ____ No

3. How satisfied are you with this course? (Circle the appropriate number.)

Very Unsatisfied 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Very Satisfied

4. At the time you decided to take this course, the ABCDF grade you thought you realistically could achieve was:

(13) ____ A+	(10) ____ B+	(07) ____ C+	(04) ____ D+	(01) ____ F
(12) ____ A	(09) ____ B	(06) ____ C	(03) ____ D	
(11) ____ A-	(08) ____ B-	(05) ____ C-	(02) ____ D-	

(Go on to the next page.)

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5. What grade average have you earned in this course up to this point, based on grades received?

(13) ___ A+ (10) ___ B+ (07) ___ C+ (04) ___ D+ (01) ___ F

(12) ___ A (09) ___ B (06) ___ C (03) ___ D

(11) ___ A- (08) ___ B- (05) ___ C- (02) ___ D-

6. How many undergraduate courses have you elected to take at U.T. Austin on a Pass-Fail Option basis? Check appropriate number.

(0) ____ none

(1) ____ 1

(2) ____ 2

(3) ____ 3

(4) ____ 4

(5) ____ 5

(6) ____ 6

7. How many courses have you taken at other collegiate institutions on a Pass-Fail or Credit (Cr)/Non-Credit (NCr) basis?

(0) ____ none

(1) ____ 1

(2) ____ 2

(3) ____ 3

(4) ____ 4

(5) ____ 5

(6) ____ 6

8. To help you in selecting your major, have you elected to take at least one course at U.T. Austin on a Pass-Fail basis?

(1) ____ Yes

(2) ____ No

IF YOUR ANSWER TO QUESTION #8 WAS NO, OMIT QUESTION #9.

9. How important was that (those) course(s) to you in helping you select your major?

Very Unimportant 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Very Important

(Go on to the next page.)

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OMIT QUESTION # 10 IF YOU HAVE NOT TAKEN A COURSE AT U.T. AUSTIN ON A PASS-FAIL OPTION BASIS.

10. For what other purposes have you taken courses on a Pass-Fail Option basis at U.T. Austin? Check each item that applies and then rate the degree to which that item was successful in accomplishing its purpose. The scale indicated refers to the following:

1 = not at all satisfied
2 = moderately unsatisfied
3 = mildly unsatisfied
4 = neither satisfied nor unsatisfied
5 = mildly satisfied
6 = moderately satisfied
7 = completely satisfied

OTHER INTENDED PURPOSES FOR TAKING COURSES ON A PASS-FAIL OPTION BASIS AT U.T. AUSTIN	DEGREE TO WHICH YOU WERE SATISFIED WITH COURSES TAKEN ON PASS-FAIL OPTION IN ACCOMPLISHING THE INTENDED PURPOSES YOU HAVE CHECKED AT LEFT. (Circle appropriate number on checked items only.)					
	NOT AT ALL SATISFIED						COMPLETELY SATISFIED
a. _____ To lighten my load.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
b. _____ To minimize the risk of low grades in an unfamiliar area.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
c. _____ To maximize my learning without having to worry about the grade.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
d. _____ To avoid competition with students majoring in the area.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
e. _____ To enable me to hold a part-time job.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
f. _____ Had never taken a pass-fail course before and wanted to try it.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
g. _____ Because I'm opposed in principle to other means of grading.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
h. _____ To enable me to take courses outside my major area for exploratory purposes as a possible minor or interest area.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
i. _____ To reduce anxiety about my grades.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
j. _____ ____________________ (write in)	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

OMIT QUESTION # 11 IF YOU HAVE NOT TAKEN ANY COURSES ON A PASS-FAIL OPTION BASI
AT U.T. AUSTIN.

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11. This question inquires into your experiences with courses you elected to take at U.T. Austin on a pass-fail basis, including those you may be taking right now. First, write in the name or number of each pass-fail course you have taken in the space indicated. Start with your most recent course (this course, if you are taking it on a pass-fail basis) in Column 1 and work backwards through Columns 2, 3, 4, 5, and 6. Next, read all of the descriptive statements to the left of the columns. Then, check each of the blanks in Column 1 corresponding to the descriptive sentences that apply in describing your reaction to your most recent pass-fail course. Check applicable blanks in Column 2 for your next most recent pass-fail course. Repeat this procedure in the successive columns for as many such courses as you have taken.

	Col. 1	Col. 2	Col. 3	Col. 4	Col. 5	Col. 6
NAMES OF COURSES TAKEN (write in) →						
a. This course counted toward fulfilling specified Area Requirements outside the department in which I'm majoring.	___	___	___	___	___	___
b. I worked harder than I usually do for a course.	___	___	___	___	___	___
c. I worked less hard than I usually do for a course.	___	___	___	___	___	___
d. I was less anxious about the course than I usually am when I am graded on an ABCDF basis.	___	___	___	___	___	___
e. I got more out of the course than I usually do when graded on an ABCDF basis.	___	___	___	___	___	___
f. I got less out of the course than I usually do when graded only on an ABCDF basis.	___	___	___	___	___	___
g. It caused me to want to take at least one additional course in the same academic discipline, but I have not yet done so.	___	___	___	___	___	___
h. It caused me to take at least one other course in the same academic discipline, and I have done or am now doing so.	___	___	___	___	___	___
i. I would recommend this course to a friend who asked me about it.	___	___	___	___	___	___
j. I would not have taken this course if it had been offered only on an ABCDF basis.	___	___	___	___	___	___

12. A number of suggestions have been made about potential changes in the current undergraduate pass-fail option system at U.T. Austin. Please rate the degree to which you would support or oppose each of the possible options listed below by circling the appropriate number on the indicated scale at right. Keep in mind that the points on the scale are equivalent to the following:

1 = strongly oppose
2 = moderately oppose
3 = mildly oppose
4 = neither support nor oppose
5 = mildly support
6 = moderately support
7 = strongly support

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POSSIBLE OPTIONS IN THE UNDERGRADUATE PASS-FAIL OPTION SYSTEM AT U.T. AUSTIN	DEGREE TO WHICH YOU OPPOSE OR SUPPORT SUCH A CHANGE (Circle appropriate number)						
	STRONGLY OPPOSE						STRONGLY SUPPORT
a. Leave it as it is.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
b. Abolish the undergraduate pass-fail option completely.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
c. Restrict it to courses outside one's major department.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
d. Restrict it to courses outside one's major department and outside of Area Requirements.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
e. Restrict it to courses outside one's major department and outside of Area and College Requirements.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
f. Permit each College or School within the University to set its own regulations about the undergraduate pass-fail option.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
g. Permit undergraduate students to take as many courses as they wish on a pass-fail option basis, as long as they have met the course prerequisites.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
h. Extend until the end of the semester the point at which an undergraduate student can change from Pass-Fail status to ABCDF status.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
i. Extend until the end of the semester the point at which an undergraduate student can change from ABCDF status to Pass-Fail status.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
j. The undergraduate student should decide when he/she registers for a course whether he/she will take it on a pass-fail option basis and should not be permitted to change later.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

(Question is continued on next page.)

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POSSIBLE OPTIONS IN THE UNDERGRADUATE PASS-FAIL OPTION SYSTEM AT U.T. AUSTIN	DEGREE TO WHICH YOU OPPOSE OR SUPPORT THE OPTION. (Circle appropriate number.) STRONGLY OPPOSE						STRONGLY SUPPORT
k. Require an undergraduate student to do at least C (as opposed to D) work in a course in order to receive a "pass" when taking a course on a pass-fail option basis.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
l. Require instructors to advise undergraduate students taking their courses on a pass-fail option basis at the outset what the minimum competence standards for passing that course will be.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
m. Require undergraduate students to have a specified minimum cumulative grade-point average before they may take a course on a pass-fail option basis.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
n. Permit either pass-fail grading or ABCDF grading in all undergraduate courses that now use only pass-fail grading.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
o. Leave the matter of whether or not a student may take a particular undergraduate course on a pass-fail option basis to the discretion of the professor involved.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
p. Extend the eligibility to take courses on a pass-fail option basis to freshmen.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
q. Assure that professors have no knowledge of which undergraduate students are taking their courses on a pass-fail basis and which students are taking it on an ABCDF basis. The professor would turn in ABCDF grades for all students, and the appropriate course grade would be recorded by the Registrar.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
r. Do not use a failing grade received in an undergraduate course taken on a pass-fail option basis in calculating grade-point average.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
s. For each undergraduate course taken on a pass-fail option basis, have the Registrar also record in a special file the appropriate ABCDF letter grade earned by the student, and permit the ABCDF letter grade to be retrieved and reported at the student's request (for example, for graduate school admissions or for employment purposes.)	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

(Go on to the next page.)

13. On the U.T. Austin campus, a variety of beliefs exist about undergraduate students' academic orientations and the purposes served by grading. Please express your views about each of the statements below by circling the number on the seven point scale that best reflects how you feel. Keep in mind that the points on the scale are equivalent to the following:

1 = strongly disagree
2 = moderately disagree
3 = mildly disagree
4 = neither agree nor disagree
5 = mildly agree
6 = moderately agree
7 = strongly agree

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BELIEFS ABOUT U.T. AUSTIN UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS' ACADEMIC ORIENTATIONS AND PURPOSES OF GRADING	STRONGLY DISAGREE						STRONGLY AGREE
a. Most undergraduate students are more interested in the subject matter of their courses than in the grades they receive.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
b. Most undergraduate students need the incentive of grades to motivate them to work.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
c. Grades do not reflect how much undergraduate students get out of a course.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
d. Most undergraduate students will do the least work they can to get by.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
e. Grades are needed to let undergraduate students know where they stand relative to other students in the course.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
f. Grades are needed to let undergraduate students know where they stand with respect to mastery of the course content.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
g. Grades are needed to provide faculty with feedback about the degree to which they are getting their subject matter across to undergraduate students.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
h. If it weren't for graduate school entrance requirements, undergraduate grades would be unnecessary.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
i. If it weren't for getting a job, undergraduate grades would be unnecessary.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
j. The purposes of higher education would be better served if there were no undergraduate grades at all.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
k. Most undergraduate students are interested in learning for learning's sake.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
l. It might be to an undergraduate student's disadvantage later on if he/she were to take courses on a pass-fail basis.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
m. Most undergraduate students who elect to take courses on a pass-fail option basis work less hard than for ABCDF graded courses.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
n. Most undergraduate students who elect to take courses on a pass-fail option basis are achievement-oriented.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
o. It is almost impossible for an undergraduate student to get a failing grade when taking a course on a pass-fail option basis.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

(Go on to the next page.)

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ANSWER QUESTION # 14 IF YOU HAVE TAKEN OR ARE NOW TAKING AN UNDERGRADUATE COURSE AT U.T. AUSTIN ON A PASS-FAIL BASIS. ANSWER QUESTION # 15 IF YOU HAVE NEVER TAKEN A COURSE AT U.T. AUSTIN ON A PASS-FAIL OPTION BASIS.

14. To what extent have the administrative procedures necessary for pass-fail registration been an inconvenience for you?

Not At All 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 To A Great Extent

15. To what extent have the administrative procedures served as a deterrent to your taking a course on a pass-fail option basis?

Not At All 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 To A Great Extent

16. Administrative considerations appear to be given greater weight at U.T. Austin in determining undergraduate pass-fail option policies than student preferences.

Strongly Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Strongly Agree

17. Administrative considerations appear to be given greater weight at U.T. Austin in determining undergraduate pass-fail option policies than faculty preferences.

Strongly Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Strongly Agree

18. U.T. Austin faculty are less willing to spend time with an undergraduate student taking a course on a pass-fail option basis than with a classmate taking the course on an ABCDF grading basis.

Strongly Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Strongly Agree

19. A U.T. Austin faculty member is likely to lower his/her standards for a minimally passing grade for an undergraduate student taking his/her course on a pass-fail option basis.

Strongly Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Strongly Agree

20. I think that undergraduate students who take courses at U.T. Austin on a pass-fail option basis are usually: (check one)

(1) _____ better students

(2) _____ poorer students

(3) _____ average students

(4) _____ approximately equal numbers of better, poorer, and average students

(5) _____ students from both extremes of ability levels (the poorer and the better)

21. After my experience with taking courses at U.T. Austin on a pass-fail option basis, I would recommend to a friend that he take undergraduate courses on a pass-fail option basis whenever possible.

Strongly disagree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Strongly Disagree

(Go on to the next page.)

22. How well informed are you about the undergraduate pass-fail option system of grading at U.T. Austin?

Not At All 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 To A Great Extent

DATA ABOUT YOURSELF:

23. Sex:

(1) _____ M

(2) _____ F

24. Rank in High School Graduating Class: (Estimate if necessary)

(1) _____ Top 10%

(2) _____ Upper (first) quarter, but not top 10%

(3) _____ Second quarter

(4) _____ Third quarter

(5) _____ Fourth (bottom) quarter

25. Present Classification:

(1) _____ Freshman

(2) _____ Sophomore

(3) _____ Junior

(4) _____ Senior (fourth year)

(5) _____ Senior (fifth year)

(6) _____ Graduate

(7) _____ Special Student

(8) _____ Other: ______________________

26. SAT Scores: (Estimate if necessary)

Didn't take SAT __________

Verbal ___ ___ ___

Mathematical ___ ___ ___

Total ___ ___ ___ ___

27. U.T. Austin Grade-Point Average: (on a 4.0 scale on which A=4, B=3, etc.; e.g., 2.56)

(a) ___ . ___ ___ Overall Cumulative Grade-Point Average (Estimate if necessary)

(b) ___ . ___ ___ Cumulative Grade-Point Average in courses in your major (Estimate if necessary)

(c) ___ . ___ ___ If you have no major, your cumulative Grade-Point Average in Upper Division Courses (Estimate if necessary)

(Go on to the next page)

28. Current Major: Select the appropriate code number from the attached sheet (last page) and write it here. ___ ___ ___ (For example, if your major is English write in 0 6 2 .)

29. List in order (most recent to least recent) other majors, if any (using appropriate code numbers from the attached sheet):

(a) ___ ___ ___ most recent previous major (code number)

(b) ___ ___ ___ next most recent previous major (code number)

(c) ___ ___ ___ next most recent previous major (code number)

30. Are you a Transfer Student?

(1) _____ Yes

(2) _____ No

31. If your answer to question #30 was yes, write in your overall Cumulative Grade-Point Average from your previous college(s): (Estimate if necessary.)

___ . ___ ___

32. Are you planning to go on to a professional or graduate school?

(1) _____ Yes

(2) _____ No

(3) _____ Undecided

33. How certain are you about your career plans?

COMPLETELY UNCERTAIN	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	COMPLETELY CERTAIN

34. If there are any additional matters relating to the pass-fail option for undergraduate students at U.T. Austin on which you would like to give your opinions or suggestions, please write these below or on the back of this page. We are especially interested in any additional comments you may have.

Thank you for your cooperation.

Margaret Berry, Director
Pass-Fail Option Survey Project
Telephone: 471-1133

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LIST OF MAJORS (BY COLLEGES):

College of Business Administration:

01. Accounting
02. Actuarial Science
03. Business, Freshman-Sophomore
04. Business, General
05. Business, Honors
06. Business, International
07. Business, Special
08 Business, Undetermined
09. Engineering Route to Business
10. Finance
11. Insurance
12. Management
13. Marketing
14. Office Administration
15. Petroleum Land Management
16. Statistics and Operational Research
17. Transportation
18. World Resource & Industries

School of Communication:

19. Advertising
20. Communications, Freshman-Sophomore
21. Journalism
22. Radio-Television-Film
23. Speech

College of Education:

24. Education, Elementary
25. Education, Physical
26. Education, Secondary
27. Education, Special
28. Education, Undetermined
29. Teaching Certificate

College of Engineering:

30. Aerospace
31. Architectural
32. Chemical
33. Civil
34. Electrical
35. Engineering Science
36. Mechanical
37. Petroleum

College of Fine Arts:

38. Art
39. Art, Education
40. Art, History
41. Art, Studio
42. Drama
43. Drama, Education
44. Drama, Production
45. Fine Arts B. A.
46. Music
47. Music, Education
48. Music, Theory
49. Music, Applied
50. Music, Literature
51. Playwriting

General and Comparative Studies:

52. Archeological Studies
53. Architecture Studies
54. American Studies
55. Ethnic Studies
56. Latin American Studies
57. Middle Eastern Studies
58. Plan II
59. Undetermined in General and Comparative Studies

College of Humanities:

60. Classics
61. Czech
62. English
63. French
64. German
65. Greek
66. Hebrew
67. Italian
68. Latin
69. Oriental and African Languages
70. Philosophy
71. Portuguese
72. Russian
73. Spanish
74. Undetermined in Humanities

College of Natural Sciences:

75. Biology
76. Botany
77. Chemistry
78. Child Development, B. S.
79. Food Systems Management, B. S.
80. General Home Economics, B. S.
81. Geology
82. Home Economics, B. S.
83. Interior Design, B. S.
84. Mathematics
85. Medical Technology
86. Microbiology
87. Nutrition
88. Physics
89. Teacher Education Home Economics
90. Textiles and Clothing. B. S.
91. Physics
92. Zoology
93. Undetermined, Natural Science

College of Social and Behavioral Sciences:

94. Anthropology
95. Economics
96. Geography
97. Government
98. History
99. Linguistics
100. Psychology
101. Sociology
102. Undetermined, Social & Behav. Science

Special Advising in Arts and Sciences:

103. Asian Studies
104. Folklore
105. Health Professions
106. International Studies
107. Physical Therapy
108. Social Welfare Studies

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109. Pre Dental
110. Pre Med (Liberal Arts)
111. Nursing
112. Pharmacy
113. Law
114. Architecture
115. Undetermined (No College)
116. No Major Listed

Appendix B

FACULTY PASS-FAIL OPTION QUESTIONNAIRE

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FACULTY PASS-FAIL OPTION QUESTIONNAIRE

The University of Texas at Austin

Orientation: During the past year considerable discussion has focused on the undergraduate Pass-Fail Option system of grading at U.T. Austin and its possible revision. Students, faculty, and administrators are agreed that insufficient data are available on which to base reasonable decisions about the desirability of change. Hence, carefully selected representative samples of all three groups are being asked to participate in this important survey. Your responses will help to provide an adequate data base that will be used in formulating future policies concerning the undergraduate Pass-Fail Option. Please help us by completing the attached questionnaire. Thank you.

Directions: The questions listed below refer to the elective pass-fail system (pass-fail option) at the University of Texas at Austin as presently available to sophomore, junior and senior students. If your experience with pass-fail courses has been at another collegiate institution, or if you are familiar with the pass-fail system at the graduate level, or if you have taught required undergraduate courses available only on a pass-fail option basis, disregard those experiences. We want to get your impressions as they pertain to undergraduate students at U.T. Austin who elect to take certain courses on a pass-fail option basis. Respond to all appropriate questions even if you are not entirely sure of your answer. Usually, your first response is the best one.

Please note that the term "ABCDF grading" is used throughout this questionnaire and refers to the traditional system of letter grading.

1. Write the department and college (or school) in which you teach:

_______________ Department

_______________ College (or school)

2. Check as many as apply:

_____ a. I am currently teaching one or more courses which are being taken by some undergraduate students electively on a pass-fail option basis.

_____ b. I have previously taught one or more courses at U.T. Austin which have been taken by undergraduate students on a pass-fail option basis.

_____ c. To the best of my recollection, no undergraduate student has taken any of my courses at U.T. Austin on an elective pass-fail option basis.

3. I would estimate that my experience with undergraduate students at U.T. Austin electing to take courses on a pass-fail option basis has been with: (check one)

_____(1) no students

_____(2) 1 or 2 students

_____(3) 3 to 7 students

_____(4) 8 to 15 students

_____(5) 16 to 25 students

_____(6) 26 to 50 students

_____(7) 51 to 100 students

_____(8) more than 100 students

(Go on to the next page.)

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OMIT QUESTIONS 4 AND 5 IF YOU HAVE HAD NO UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS TAKING YOUR COURSES AT U.T. AUSTIN ON A PASS-FAIL OPTION BASIS.

4. As nearly as you can infer, what are the primary reasons U.T. Austin undergraduate students take your course(s) on a pass-fail option basis? (Check as many as apply. Double check those you consider particularly important.)

_____ a. as an aid to the selection of a major.

_____ b. to lighten their load.

_____ c. to minimize the risk of low grades in an unfamiliar area.

_____ d. to maximize their learning without worrying about their grades.

_____ e. to avoid competition with students majoring in the area.

_____ f. to enable them to hold part-time jobs.

_____ g. because they had never taken a pass-fail course before and wanted to try it.

_____ h. because they were opposed in principle to other means of grading.

_____ i. to enable them to take courses outside their major areas for exploratory purposes as possible minors or interest areas.

_____ j. to reduce anxiety about grades.

_____ k. to get by with less effort.

_____ l. other: ______________________________ (write in)

_____ m. I have no basis for responding.

5. In your personal judgement, what would be "legitimate" reasons for U.T. Austin undergraduate students to take your course(s) on a pass-fail option basis? (Check as many as apply. Double check those you consider particularly important.)

_____ a. as an aid to the selection of a major.

_____ b. to lighten their load.

_____ c. to minimize the risk of low grades in an unfamiliar area.

_____ d. to maximize their learning without worrying about their grades.

_____ e. to avoid competition with students majoring in the area.

_____ f. to enable them to hold part-time jobs.

_____ g. because they had never taken a pass-fail course before and wanted to try it.

_____ h. because they were opposed in principle to other means of grading.

_____ i. to enable them to take courses outside their major areas for exploratory purposes as possible minors or interest areas.

_____ j. to reduce anxiety about grades.

_____ k. to get by with less effort.

_____ l. other: ______________________________ (write in)

_____ m. I have no basis for responding.

6. A number of suggestions have been made about potential changes in the current undergraduate pass-fail option system at U.T. Austin. Please rate the degree to which you would support or oppose each of the possible options listed below by circling the appropriate number on the indicated scale at right. Keep in mind that the points on the scale are equivalent to the following:

1 = strongly oppose
2 = moderately oppose
3 = mildly oppose
4 = neither support nor oppose
5 = mildly support
6 = moderately support
7 = strongly support

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POSSIBLE OPTIONS IN THE UNDERGRADUATE PASS-FAIL OPTION SYSTEM AT U.T. AUSTIN	DEGREE TO WHICH YOU OPPOSE OR SUPPORT SUCH A CHANGE (Circle appropriate number)						
	STRONGLY OPPOSE						STRONGLY SUPPORT
a. Leave it as it is.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
b. Abolish the undergraduate pass-fail option completely.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
c. Restrict it to courses outside one's major department.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
d. Restrict it to courses outside one's major department and outside of Area Requirements.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
e. Restrict it to courses outside one's major department and outside of Area and College Requirements.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
f. Permit each College or School within the University to set its own regulations about the undergraduate pass-fail option.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
g. Permit undergraduate students to take as many courses as they wish on a pass-fail option basis, as long as they have met the course prerequisites.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
h. Extend until the end of the semester the point at which an undergraduate student can change from Pass-Fail status to ABCDF status.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
i. Extend until the end of the semester the point at which an undergraduate student can change from ABCDF status to Pass-Fail status.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
j. The undergraduate student should decide when he/she registers for a course whether he/she will take it on a pass-fail option basis and should not be permitted to change later.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

(Question is continued on next page.)

6. (Continued)

POSSIBLE OPTIONS IN THE UNDERGRADUATE PASS-FAIL OPTION SYSTEM AT U.T. AUSTIN	DEGREE TO WHICH YOU OPPOSE OR SUPPORT THE OPTION. (Circle appropriate number.)						
	STRONGLY OPPOSE						STRONGLY SUPPORT
k. Require an undergraduate student to do at least C (as opposed to D) work in a course in order to receive a "pass" when taking a course on a pass-fail option basis.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
l. Require instructors to advise undergraduate students taking their courses on a pass-fail option basis at the outset what the minimum competence standards for passing that course will be.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
m. Require undergraduate students to have a specified minimum cumulative grade-point average before they may take a course on a pass-fail option basis.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
n. Permit either pass-fail grading or ABCDF grading in all undergraduate courses that now use only pass-fail grading.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
o. Leave the matter of whether or not a student may take a particular undergraduate course on a pass-fail option basis to the discretion of the professor involved.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
p. Extend the eligibility to take courses on a pass-fail option basis to freshmen.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
q. Assure that professors have no knowledge of which undergraduate students are taking their courses on a pass-fail basis and which students are taking it on an ABCDF basis. The professor would turn in ABCDF grades for all students, and the appropriate course grade would be recorded by the Registrar.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
r. Do not use a failing grade received in an undergraduate course taken on a pass-fail option basis in calculating grade-point average.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
s. For each undergraduate course taken on a pass-fail option basis, have the Registrar also record in a special file the appropriate ABCDF letter grade earned by the student, and permit the ABCDF letter grade to be retrieved and reported at the student's request (for example, for graduate school admissions or for employment purposes.)	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

(Go on to the next page.)

7. On the U.T. Austin campus, a variety of beliefs exist about undergraduate students' academic orientations and the purposes served by grading. Please express your views about each of the statements below by circling the number on the seven point scale that best reflects how you feel. Keep in mind that the points on the scale are equivalent to the following:

1 = strongly disagree
2 = moderately disagree
3 = mildly disagree
4 = neither agree nor disagree
5 = mildly agree
6 = moderately agree
7 = strongly agree

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BELIEFS ABOUT U.T. AUSTIN UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS' ACADEMIC ORIENTATIONS AND PURPOSES OF GRADING	STRONGLY DISAGREE						STRONGLY AGREE
a. Most undergraduate students are more interested in the subject matter of their courses than in the grades they receive.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
b. Most undergraduate students need the incentive of grades to motivate them to work.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
c. Grades do not reflect how much undergraduate students get out of a course.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
d. Most undergraduate students will do the least work they can to get by.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
e. Grades are needed to let undergraduate students know where they stand relative to other students in the course.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
f. Grades are needed to let undergraduate students know where they stand with respect to mastery of the course content.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
g. Grades are needed to provide faculty with feedback about the degree to which they are getting their subject matter across to undergraduate students.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
h. If it weren't for graduate school entrance requirements, undergraduate grades would be unnecessary.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
i. If it weren't for getting a job, undergraduate grades would be unnecessary.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
j. The purposes of higher education would be better served if there were no undergraduate grades at all.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
k. Most undergraduate students are interested in learning for learning's sake.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
l. It might be to an undergraduate student's disadvantage later on if he/she were to take courses on a pass-fail basis.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
m. Most undergraduate students who elect to take courses on a pass-fail option basis work less hard than for ABCDF graded courses.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
n. Most undergraduate students who elect to take courses on a pass-fail option basis are achievement-oriented.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
o. It is almost impossible for an undergraduate student to get a failing grade when taking a course on a pass-fail option basis.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

(Go on to the next page.)

8. My impressions about U.T. Austin undergraduate students who elect to take courses on a pass-fail option basis is that they most typically: (Check all that apply.)

_____ a. work harder than they usually do for courses.

_____ b. work less hard than they usually do for courses.

_____ c. are less anxious about such courses than they are when graded on an ABCDF basis.

_____ d. get less out of courses than they usually do when the courses are graded only on an ABCDF basis.

_____ e. are encouraged to take additional course work in the same areas as a direct result of their experiences.

_____ f. tend to recommend to friends that they take undergraduate courses on a pass-fail basis whenever possible.

_____ g. would not have taken those courses if they had been offered only on an ABCDF basis.

_____ h. other: ______________________________ (write in)

_____ i. I have no basis for responding to this question.

9. To what extent have the administrative procedures necessary for pass-fail registration seemed an inconvenience to those students known to you?

Not at all 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 To a great extent

10. To what extent have the administrative procedures served as a deterrent to your having taught a course available on a pass-fail option basis?

Not at all 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 To a great extent

11. Administrative considerations appear to be given greater weight at U.T. Austin in determining undergraduate pass-fail option policies than student preferences.

Strongly disagree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Strongly agree

12. Administrative considerations appear to be given greater weight at U.T. Austin in determining undergraduate pass-fail option policies than faculty preferences.

Strongly disagree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Strongly agree

13. U.T. Austin faculty are less willing to spend time with an undergraduate student taking a course on a pass-fail option basis than with another student taking the course on an ABCDF grading basis.

Strongly disagree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Strongly agree

14. A U.T. Austin faculty member is likely to lower his standards for a minimally passing grade for an undergraduate student taking his course on a pass-fail option basis.

Strongly disagree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Strongly agree

(Go on to the next page.)

15. I think that undergraduate students who take courses at U.T. Austin on a pass-fail option basis are usually:

_____(1) better students

_____(2) poorer students

_____(3) average students

_____(4) approximately equal numbers of better, poorer and average students

_____(5) students from both extremes of ability levels (i.e. the better and the poorer)

16. Assuming the matter were entirely up to you, and considering your personal preferences for your own undergraduate courses, would you: (Check one)

_____(1) prefer that your courses not be available to any student on a pass-fail option basis

_____(2) prefer that they be available on a pass-fail option basis to those students of your choosing

_____(3) prefer that they be available to any eligible students who desire to take them on a pass-fail option basis

_____(4) other: ____
(write in)

17. On the basis of what I know about the pass-fail option system, I would recommend to an undergraduate student at U.T. Austin, in whom I was interested, that he take courses on a pass-fail option basis whenever possible.

Strongly disagree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Strongly agree

18. How well informed are you about the undergraduate pass-fail option system of grading at U.T. Austin?

Not at all informed 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Very well informed

DATA ABOUT YOURSELF:

19. Sex:

(1) _____ M
(2) _____ F

20. Academic Rank:

(1) _____ Teaching Assistant
(2) _____ Assistant Instructor
(3) _____ Instructor
(4) _____ Assistant Professor
(5) _____ Associate Professor
(6) _____ Professor
(7) _____ Lecturer
(8) _____ Other

21. Years on faculty (teaching experience at U.T. Austin)

(1) _____ less than 1 year
(2) _____ 1 to 3 years
(3) _____ 4 to 6 years
(4) _____ 7 to 10 years
(5) _____ 11 to 15 years
(6) _____ 16 or more years

22. Total years of collegiate teaching experience (elsewhere and at U.T. Austin):
    (1) _____ less than 1 year
    (2) _____ 1 to 3 years
    (3) _____ 4 to 6 years
    (4) _____ 7 to 10 years
    (5) _____ 11 to 15 years
    (6) _____ 16 or more years

23. At which of the following student classification levels do you most often teach?
    (1) _____ Undergraduate -- lower division
    (2) _____ Undergraduate -- upper division
    (3) _____ Graduate -- masters level
    (4) _____ Graduate -- doctoral level

24. What research evidence would you require to seriously consider changing your thinking or position, whether pro, con, or neutral, in regard to the future of the Pass-Fail Option for students at U.T. Austin?

25. If there are any additional matters relating to the Pass-Fail Option for undergraduate students at U.T. Austin on which you would like to give your opinions or suggestions, please write these below or on the back of this page, or telephone Dr. Margaret Berry, Project Director (471-1133) or Dr. Victor Appel, Project Coordinator (471-7204). We are especially interested in any additional comments you may have.

Thank you for your cooperation.

Margaret Berry

Margaret Berry, Director
Pass-Fail Option Survey Project

Appendix C

ADMINISTRATOR PASS-FAIL OPTION QUESTIONNAIRE

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ADMINISTRATOR PASS-FAIL OPTION QUESTIONNAIRE

The University of Texas at Austin

Orientation: During the past year considerable discussion has focused on the undergraduate Pass-Fail Option system of grading at U.T. Austin and its possible revision. Students, faculty, and administrators are agreed that insufficient data are available on which to base reasonable decisions about the desirability of change. Hence, carefully selected representative samples of all three groups are being asked to participate in this important survey. Your responses will help to provide an adequate data base that will be used in formulating future policies concerning the undergraduate Pass-Fail Option. Please help us by completing the attached questionnaire. Thank you.

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Directions: The questions listed below refer to the elective pass-fail system (pass-fail option) at The University of Texas at Austin as presently available to sophomore, junior and senior students. If your experience with pass-fail courses has been at another collegiate institution, or if you are familiar with the pass-fail system at the graduate level, or if you have taught required undergraduate courses available only on a pass-fail option basis, disregard those experiences. We want to get your impressions as they pertain to undergraduate students at U.T. Austin who elect to take certain courses on a pass-fail option basis. Respond to all appropriate questions even if you are not entirely sure of your answer. Usually, your first response is the best one.

Please note that the term "ABCDF grading" is used throughout this questionnaire and refers to the traditional system of letter grading.

1. Write the college (school) or general administrative office in which you serve as an administrator.

____________________ college (or school)

____________________ administrative office

2. Check as many as apply:

_____ a. My administrative duties occupy 100% of my time.

_____ b. I am currently teaching one or more courses which are being taken by some undergraduate students electively on a pass-fail option basis.

_____ c. I have previously taught one or more courses at U.T. Austin which have been taken by undergraduate students on a pass-fail option basis.

_____ d. To the best of my recollection, no undergraduate student has taken any of my courses at U.T. Austin on an elective pass-fail option basis.

_____ e. The course(s) I teach is (are) elective, but is (are) only offered on a pass-fail option basis.

_____ f. The course(s) I teach is (are) required, but is (are) only offered on a pass-fail option basis.

3. I would estimate that my experience with undergraduate students at U.T Austin electing to take courses (those of other professors as well as my own) on a pass-fail option basis has been with: (check one)

_____(1) no students
_____(2) 1 or 2 students
_____(3) 3 to 7 students
_____(4) 8 to 15 students
_____(5) 16 to 25 students
_____(6) 26 to 50 students
_____(7) 51 to 100 students
_____(8) 101 to 500 students
_____(9) more than 500 students

(go on to the next page)

4. As nearly as you can infer, what are the primary reasons U.T. Austin undergraduate students take course(s) on a pass-fail option basis? (Check as many as apply. Double check those you consider particularly important.)

______ a. as an aid to the selection of a major.

______ b. to lighten their load.

______ c. to minimize the risk of low grades in an unfamiliar area.

______ d. to maximize their learning without worrying about their grades.

______ e. to avoid competition with students majoring in the area.

______ f. to enable them to hold part-time jobs.

______ g. because they had never taken a pass-fail course before and wanted to try it.

______ h. because they were opposed in principle to other means of grading.

______ i. to enable them to take courses outside their major areas for exploratory purposes as possible minors or interest areas.

______ j. to reduce anxiety about grades.

______ k. to get by with less effort.

______ l. other: ____
(write in)

______ m. I have no basis for responding.

5. In your personal judgment, what would be "legitimate" reasons for U.T. Austin undergraduate students to take course(s) on a pass-fail option basis? (Check as many as apply. Double check those you consider particularly important.)

______ a. as an aid to the selection of a major.

______ b. to lighten their load.

______ c. to minimize the risk of low grades in an unfamiliar area.

______ d. to maximize their learning without worrying about their grades.

______ e. to avoid competition with students majoring in the area.

______ f. to enable them to hold part-time jobs.

______ g. because they had never taken a pass-fail course before and wanted to try it.

______ h. because they were opposed in principle to other means of grading.

______ i. to enable them to take courses outside their major areas for exploratory purposes as possible minors or interest areas.

______ j. to reduce anxiety about grades.

______ k. to get by with less effort.

______ l. other: ____
(write in)

______ m. I have no basis for responding.

6. A number of suggestions have been made about potential changes in the current undergraduate pass-fail option system at U.T. Austin. Please rate the degree to which you would support or oppose each of the possible options listed below by circling the appropriate number on the indicated scale at right. Keep in mind that the points on the scale are equivalent to the following:

1 = strongly oppose
2 = moderately oppose
3 = mildly oppose
4 = neither support nor oppose
5 = mildly support
6 = moderately support
7 = strongly support

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POSSIBLE OPTIONS IN THE UNDERGRADUATE PASS-FAIL OPTION SYSTEM AT U.T. AUSTIN	DEGREE TO WHICH YOU OPPOSE OR SUPPORT SUCH A CHANGE (Circle appropriate number)						
	STRONGLY OPPOSE						STRONGLY SUPPORT
a. Leave it as it is.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
b. Abolish the undergraduate pass-fail option completely.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
c. Restrict it to courses outside one's major department.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
d. Restrict it to courses outside one's major department and outside of Area Requirements.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
e. Restrict it to courses outside one's major department and outside of Area and College Requirements.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
f. Permit each College or School within the University to set its own regulations about the undergraduate pass-fail option.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
g. Permit undergraduate students to take as many courses as they wish on a pass-fail option basis, as long as they have met the course prorequisites.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
h. Extend until the end of the semester the point at which an undergraduate student can change from Pass-Fail status to ABCDF status.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
i. Extend until the end of the semester the point at which an undergraduate student can change from ABCDF status to Pass-Fail status.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
j. The undergraduate student should decide when he/she registers for a course whether he/she will take it on a pass-fail option basis and should not be permitted to change later.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

(Question is continued on next page.)

6. (Continued)

POSSIBLE OPTIONS IN THE UNDERGRADUATE PASS-FAIL OPTION SYSTEM AT U.T. AUSTIN	DEGREE TO WHICH YOU OPPOSE OR SUPPORT THE OPTION. (Circle appropriate number.)						
	STRONGLY OPPOSE						STRONGLY SUPPORT
k. Require an undergraduate student to do at least C (as opposed to D) work in a course in order to receive a "pass" when taking a course on a pass-fail option basis.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
l. Require instructors to advise undergraduate students taking their courses on a pass-fail option basis at the outset what the minimum competence standards for passing that course will be.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
m. Require undergraduate students to have a specified minimum cumulative grade-point average before they may take a course on a pass-fail option basis.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
n. Permit either pass-fail grading or ABCDF grading in all undergraduate courses that now use only pass-fail grading.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
o. Leave the matter of whether or not a student may take a particular undergraduate course on a pass-fail option basis to the discretion of the professor involved.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
p. Extend the eligibility to take courses on a pass-fail option basis to freshmen.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
q. Assure that professors have no knowledge of which undergraduate students are taking their courses on a pass-fail basis and which students are taking it on an ABCDF basis. The professor would turn in ABCDF grades for all students, and the appropriate course grade would be recorded by the Registrar.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
r. Do not use a failing grade received in an undergraduate course taken on a pass-fail option basis in calculating grade-point average.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
s. For each undergraduate course taken on a pass-fail option basis, have the Registrar also record in a special file the appropriate ABCDF letter grade earned by the student, and permit the ABCDF letter grade to be retrieved and reported at the student's request (for example, for graduate school admissions or for employment purposes.)	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

(Go on to the next page.)

7. On the U.T. Austin campus, a variety of beliefs exist about undergraduate students' academic orientations and the purposes served by grading. Please express your views about each of the statements below by circling the number on the seven point scale that best reflects how you feel. Keep in mind that the points on the scale are equivalent to the following:

1 = strongly disagree
2 = moderately disagree
3 = mildly disagree
4 = neither agree nor disagree
5 = mildly agree
6 = moderately agree
7 = strongly agree

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BELIEFS ABOUT U.T. AUSTIN UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS' ACADEMIC ORIENTATIONS AND PURPOSES OF GRADING	STRONGLY DISAGREE						STRONGLY AGREE
a. Most undergraduate students are more interested in the subject matter of their courses than in the grades they receive.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
b. Most undergraduate students need the incentive of grades to motivate them to work.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
c. Grades do not reflect how much undergraduate students get out of a course.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
d. Most undergraduate students will do the least work they can to get by.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
e. Grades are needed to let undergraduate students know where they stand relative to other students in the course.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
f. Grades are needed to let undergraduate students know where they stand with respect to mastery of the course content.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
g. Grades are needed to provide faculty with feedback about the degree to which they are getting their subject matter across to undergraduate students.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
h. If it weren't for graduate school entrance requirements, undergraduate grades would be unnecessary.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
i. If it weren't for getting a job, undergraduate grades would be unnecessary.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
j. The purposes of higher education would be better served if there were no undergraduate grades at all.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
k. Most undergraduate students are interested in learning for learning's sake.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
l. It might be to an undergraduate student's disadvantage later on if he/she were to take courses on a pass-fail basis.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
m. Most undergraduate students who elect to take courses on a pass-fail option basis work less hard than for ABCDF graded courses.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
n. Most undergraduate students who elect to take courses on a pass-fail option basis are achievement-oriented.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
o. It is almost impossible for an undergraduate student to get a failing grade when taking a course on a pass-fail option basis.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

8. My impressions about U.T. Austin undergraduate students who elect to take courses on a pass-fail option basis is that they most typically: (Check all that apply.)

____ a. work harder than they usually do for courses.

____ b. work less hard than they usually do for courses.

____ c. are less anxious about such courses than they are when graded on an ABCDF basis.

____ d. get less out of courses than they usually do when the courses are graded only on an ABCDF basis.

____ e. are encouraged to take additional course work in the same areas as a direct result of their experiences.

____ f. tend to recommend to friends that they take undergraduate courses on a pass-fail basis whenever possible.

____ g. would not have taken those courses if they had been offered only on an ABCDF basis.

____ h. other: ____
(write in)

____ i. I have no basis for responding to this question.

9. Students who take my class on a pass-fail option basis are less likely to attend class than those students who are taking it on an ABCDF grading basis.

Strongly disagree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Strongly agree

10. To what extent have the administrative procedures necessary for pass-fail registration seemed an inconvenience to those students known to you?

Not at all 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 To a great extent

11. To what extent have the administrative procedures served as a deterrent to your teaching a course available on a pass-fail option basis?

Not at all 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 To a great extent

12. Administrative considerations appear to be given greater weight at U.T. Austin in determining undergraduate pass-fail option policies than student preferences.

Strongly disagree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Strongly agree

13. Administrative considerations should be given greater weight at U.T. Austin in determining undergraduate pass-fail option policies than student preferences.

Strongly disagree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Strongly agree

14. Administrative considerations appear to be given greater weight at U.T. Austin in determining undergraduate pass-fail option policies than faculty preferences.

Strongly disagree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Strongly agree

15. Administrative considerations should be given greater weight at U.T. Austin in determining undergraduate pass-fail option policies than faculty preferences.

Strongly disagree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Strongly agree

16. U.T. Austin faculty are less willing to spend time with an undergraduate student taking a course on a pass-fail option basis than with another student taking the course on an ABCDF grading basis.

Strongly disagree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Strongly agree

17. A U.T. Austin faculty member is likely to lower his standards for a minimally passing grade for an undergraduate student taking his course on a pass-fail option basis.

Strongly disagree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Strongly agree

18. How difficult do you find the administration of the current pass-fail registration procedures?

Not at all difficult 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Extremely difficult

19. How difficult do you find the administration of the current pass-fail special paperwork involved?

Not at all difficult 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Extremely difficult

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20. Consider your previous experience in your college or school administering the pass-fail option system. Check the appropriate category corresponding to the approximate proportion of the time which you feel you adhere strictly to each of the rules listed below. Respond only to the rules which are applicable to your college or school.

Applicable College(s) or School(s)	Rule	Rarely (1-15% of the time)	Sometimes (16-35% of the time)	Frequently (36-65% of the time)	Generally (66-86% of the time)	Almost Always (87-99% of the time)
All Colleges and Schools	(a) Students must state their intentions to register for a course on a pass-fail basis by the end of the official date for adding courses and changing sections.	____	____	____	____	____
All Colleges and Schools	(b) Students must have received 30 semester hours of college credit before taking a course on a pass-fail option basis.	____	____	____	____	____
All Colleges and Schools	(c) Students may not elect to take more than two courses a semester on a pass-fail option basis.	____	____	____	____	____
All Colleges and Schools	(d) The department concerned must decide whether a course taken on a pass-fail basis may be counted as part of the student's major requirements.	____	____	____	____	____
All Colleges and Schools	(e) Advanced standing examinations on a pass-fail basis be permitted in required subjects; these courses would not be counted as part of the number of courses a student may elect to take on a pass-fail option basis.	____	____	____	____	____
Colleges of Business Administration, Education, Engineering, Fine Arts, Schools of Communications, Pharmacy, and Architecture.	(f) Undergraduate students may take not more than five semester courses in elective subjects outside their major area on a pass-fail option basis as part of the hours required for their degree.	____	____	____	____	____

21. continued

Applicable College(s) of School(s)	Rule	Rarely (1-15% of the time)	Sometimes (16-35% of the time)	Frequently (36-65% of the time)	Generally 66-86% of the time)	Almost Always (87-99% of the time)
Colleges of Humanities, Natural Science, Social and Behavioral Sciences, and Division of General and Comparative Studies	(g) Students may take up to sixteen semester hours in elective courses on a pass-fail option basis.	____	____	____	____	____
Colleges of Humanities, Natural Science, Social and Behavioral Sciences, and the Division of General and Comparative Studies	(h) Students may take one or two courses in their major on a pass-fail option basis with the approval of the major department; these courses count in the total allowance of sixteen semester hours.	____	____	____	____	____
Division of General and Comparative Studies	(i) Students in Plan II may take up to nineteen semester hours of required or elective courses on a pass-fail basis. Only two courses a semester may be taken on that basis, and only Tutorial Course 301 may be taken on that basis before the student has accumulated 30 semester hours.	____	____	____	____	____
Colleges of Natural Sciences and Humanities	(j) No courses to satisfy area requirements may be taken on a pass-fail basis.	____	____	____	____	____
School of Communications	(k) No course required for the degree may be taken on a pass-fail basis.	____	____	____	____	____
College of Engineering	(l) At the option of the student and with the approval of a dean, a student may elect to take any or all of his degree-required approved non-technical electives or any extra courses (taken for his own benefit and not counted towards his degree) on a pass-fail basis. All other degree-required courses must be taken on an ABCDF grading basis. Course credit earned by advance placement or advanced standing examination will be allowed either under the pass-fail or ABCDF basis of grading.	____	____	____	____	____

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21. I think that undergraduate students who take courses at U.T. Austin on a pass-fail option basis are usually:

_____(1) better students

_____(2) poorer students

_____(3) average students

_____(4) approximately equal numbers of better, poorer, and average students

_____(5) students from both extremes of ability levels (the better and the poorer)

22. Assuming the matter were entirely up to you, and considering your personal preferences for undergraduate courses, would you: (Check one)

_____(1) prefer that courses not be available to any undergraduate student on a pass-fail option basis

_____(2) prefer that they be available on a pass-fail option basis to those students acceptable to the instructor involved

_____(3) prefer that they be available to any eligible students who desire to take them on a pass-fail option basis

_____(4) other:____
(write in)

23. On the basis of what I know about the pass-fail option system, I would recommend to an undergraduate student at U.T. Austin, in whom I was interested, that he take courses on a pass-fail option basis whenever possible.

Strongly disagree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Strongly agree

24. How well informed are you about the undergraduate pass-fail option system of grading at U.T Austin?

Not at all informed 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Very well informed

DATA ABOUT YOURSELF:

25. Sex:

(1) _____ M

(2) _____ F

26. Academic Rank:

(1) _____ Teaching Assistant

(2) _____ Assistant Instructor

(3) _____ Instructor

(4) _____ Assistant Professor

(5) _____ Associate Professor

(6) _____ Professor

(7) _____ Lecturer

(8) _____ Other

27. Administrative Rank:

(1) _____ President

(2) _____ Vice President

(3) _____ Assistant Vice President

(4) _____ Dean

(5) _____ Associate Dean

(6) _____ Assistant Dean

(7) _____ Director

(8) _____ Other

28. Years in an administrative position at U.T. Austin:

(1) _____ less than 1 year

(2) _____ 1 to 3 years

(3) _____ 4 to 6 years

(4) _____ 7 to 10 years

(5) _____ 11 to 15 years

(6) _____ 16 or more years

29. Years of teaching experience at U.T. Austin:

(1) _____ less than 1 year

(2) _____ 1 to 3 years

(3) _____ 4 to 6 years

(4) _____ 7 to 10 years

(5) _____ 11 to 15 years

(6) _____ 16 or more years

30. Total years of collegiate teaching experience (elsewhere and at U.T. Austin):

(1) _____ less than 1 year

(2) _____ 1 to 3 years

(3) _____ 4 to 6 years

(4) _____ 7 to 10 years

(5) _____ 11 to 15 years

(6) _____ 16 or more years

31. At which of the following student classification levels do you most often teach?

(1) _____ Undergraduate--lower division

(2) _____ Undergraduate--upper division

(3) _____ Graduate--masters level

(4) _____ Graduate--doctoral level

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32. What research evidence would you require to seriously consider changing your thinking or position, whether pro, con, or neutral, in regard to the future of the Pass-Fail Option for students at U.T. Austin?

33. If there are any additional matters relating to the Pass-Fail Option for undergraduate students at U.T. Austin on which you would like to give your opinions or suggestions, please write these below or on the back of this page, or telephone Dr. Margaret Berry, Project Director (471-1133) or Dr. Victor Appel, Project Coordinator (471-7204). We are especially interested in any additional comments you may have.

Thank you for your cooperation.

Margaret Berry

Margaret Berry, Director
Pass-Fail Option Survey Project

Appendix D

THE PASS-FAIL OPTION: A REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Prepared by

Margaret Berry
Director of Developmental Programs
Office of the Vice President
for Student Affairs
The University of Texas at Austin

April, 1973

THE PASS-FAIL OPTION: A REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE[1]

A review of the recent literature on grades or marks in higher education indicates that interest and concern are increasing. Most of the written material has been published since 1964. Attention was not lacking, however, prior to the 1960's; the Encyclopaedia of Educational Research (Smith and Durbin, 1960) contains a review of published studies from 1910 to 1957, with the conclusion that some promising changes had been proposed but that widespread agreement after half a century of discussion would have to await more research into the goals of instruction and the purpose of grading. More recently, Warren (1971) drew a similar conclusion: most of the literature has been about the form rather than the substance of grading.

Grading practices are apparently sustained by a combination of tradition and custom. It is difficult to discern a true rationale or fundamental reason for grading systems (Reiner, 1972). Educational institutions need grades or evaluations of some form in a wide variety of situations: as indictators of success or failure, as disciplinary devices, as other forms of evaluation (Raimi, 1967). More specifically, grades are useful for a range of selection activities, such as employment, promotions, graduate or professional school selections, scholarship awards, and honors, as well as for motivation (Trow, 1968).

Most writers who have given attention to grading issues acknowledge the existence of justifications for systems: selection, motivation and student self-knowledge. A large number of writers view these justifications as satisfying the need for expediency more than the need for valid evaluation. The literature contains many criticisms of the degree to which actual practice appears to have been determined by factors other than the educational purposes of evaluation (Reiner, 1972).

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[1] Recent reviews of the literature on grading by Davidovicz (1972) and by Reinder (1972) were useful and were relied upon extensively in the preparation of this report.

A report prepared by a University of California committee after the 1964 upheavals was a notable attempt to address grading issues with a background of empirical information. The committee concluded that the grading system at all levels of the university penalized the imaginative student and rewarded the conformist who did everything his professor expected of him (Miller, 1961; Academic Senate, Berkeley, 1966; Axelrod *et al.*, 1969). Hoyt, in more recent study (1970), attempted to answer three questions by carefully reviewing the literature: Are grading systems rational? Are they understandable? Are they defensible? He concluded that they are rational only in a very narrow sense; that they are understandable if "understandable" is taken to mean "definable" and "predictable"; that college grades are not defensible as comprehensive indicators of student growth.

The pass-fail option as an antidote to the problem of grading

The most widespread antidote to the problem of grading is the increased use of pass-fail grading systems, now found in large numbers of colleges and universities. One study cited claims that about half of the colleges and universities in the United States have introduced some modification in their grading systems since 1965 (Warren, 1971). Another report (Quann, 1970), summarizing the results of a study of pass-fail grading trends, gives some reason to believe that many changes have been in the direction of fewer grade categories, or at

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least in the direction of eliminating or minimizing the failure category. Replies to a survey of member institutions conducted by the American Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admissions Officers (1971) indicated that about one half of the institutions used traditional grading systems; 46% used systems that combined traditional and nontraditional policies; and 2% stated they were using nontraditional systems exclusively. Yuker (1969), who reviewed the literature on pass-fail available before 1968, concluded that although not enough research was available to permit final conclusions to be drawn, a number of universities were adopting limited pass-fail options even though few of them used pass-fail grades exclusively. While the concept of pass-fail courses is rather old, its widespread acceptance is a recent innovation.

Some colleges have swung completely away from grades, however, over to pass-fail. Yale, for instance, is now pass-fail all the way. The University of California at Santa Cruz opened its campus in 1965 with total pass-fail grading and has seen no reason to change (Editors of Education U.S.A., 1972). A number of other colleges could be added to the list.

Several authors have investigated the procedures used in pass-fail grading (Bevan et al., 1969; Simpson et. al., 1970; Quann, 1970; and Johnson, 1970). Students usually take about one pass-fail course per semester. In most cases the student has to demonstrate good academic ability before he can utilize his option, and usually the pass-fail course cannot be in the student's major area. Simpson et al. (1970) reported that a failing grade does not affect the GPA in about half the schools they surveyed. One procedure, not yet widely adopted, is to eliminate dual grading standards by having instructors submit letter grades for all students and then having the registrar convert these to pass-fail grades (Johnson, 1970).

Bevan _et_ _al_. (1969) reported that those who favor pass-fail grading argue that it relieves the pressure on students and channels them to learning by making it easier to take courses they would not have taken otherwise. Those who argue against it claim that many administrative problems are created with respect to such traditional procedures as the dean's list, academic probation, academic suspension, computations of GPA, admission to graduate and professional schools and admission of transfer students. These are not areas of major concern to institutions that operate with a limited pass-fail option, though they are for those that are totally on pass-fail (Davidovicz, 1972).

Problems in the research on pass-fail grading

Research on the pass-fail option has not progressed extensively since 1967. In spite of the great amount of literature devoted to grading issues since that date, very little empirical evidence is available with which to formulate rational policies (Reiner, 1972). Weems _et_ _al_. (1971) found that 85% of the institutions using pass-fail had no evaluative data on their programs. Most of the literature reports opinions and offers little substantiating data (Davidovicz, 1972). From a research point of view, the pass-fail option is a difficult independent variable to manipulate (Stallings _et_ _al_., 1968). There seems to be a self-selection as to which students take the pass-fail option. To date, however, the criteria used to measure the effects of pass-fail have been either grade point average or grades in pass-fail courses.

Characteristics of Students selecting pass-fail option

Some researchers have identified characteristics of students selecting the pass-fail option. Stallings _et_ _al_., (1969) explored the possibility that students who were high in "fear of failure" elect the pass-fail option, regardless of their interest in the subject matter, in order to avoid an undesirable examination experience. The researchers expected pass-fail students would have the greatest amount of test anxiety, but they found no difference between a group of students enrolled under an A to F grading system and one enrolled for pass-fail credits. They also found that their pass-fail sample showed a higher GPA and carried heavier course loads. The researchers also found no difference between the groups in their reasons for choosing pass-fail courses.

Priest (1971) administered a questionnaire to a sample consisting of 433 433 students. The majority of those sampled favored a pass-fail grading system. Those who favored pass-fail grading aspired to high grades and expressed a negative attitude toward grading as being competitive. Priest also found that those who favored pass-fail grading also tended to believe that competition for grades does not promote learning and that there is too much competition for high grades. These same students reported that they did not enjoy studying and preferred evaluation of their performance on original projects. In contrast, those who favored traditional grading believed that competition stimulates learning. They wanted to be graded on their work and went to their instructors for answers to questions. In general, a clear distinction was drawn between the types of students who favored pass-fail grading and those who did not. Significantly, neither attitude was closely related to either aspirations for grades or actual school achievement.

Attitudes of Students taking pass-fail courses

Attitudes of students who have selected the pass - fail option have also been studied. It is generally agreed that pass - fail grading causes students to report a reduction in the amount of tension they perceive (Davidovicz, 1972). Stallings and Leslie (1970) were particularly critical of the effects of regular grading. They concluded, "The undergraduate perceives grades as that proverbial

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sword hanging over his head which forces him to study content he otherwise might not study," and pressures mount that can lead to cheating, a side-effect behavior. They recommended that students be permitted to take a pass-fail alternative when they want to do so and that if graduate schools complain, they should be defied. Hales et al. (1973) found that students in pass-fail courses were less anxious, but this lessening of anxiety was accompanied by a lowering of the motivation to achieve, a lowering of goals and a reduction (as seen by students) in what was learned.

Researchers who have investigated attitudes toward the pass-fail option (Sgan, 1969; Karlins, et al., 1969; Cromer, 1969; Bailey, 1972; and the Office of Institutional Research at Washington University, 1970) have consistently found that students are overwhelmingly in favor of it. There is some doubt as to whether students work as hard for pass-fail grades as they do for numerical grades; the evidence seems to indicate that they do not. Hodgkinson (1972) said, "Whether we like it or not, the Protestant ethic is based on guilt and pass-fail removes much of the guilt machinery." Karlins et al. (1969) found that letter-grade students at Princeton did 80% of their readings and went to 85% of the lectures, while passfail students did 61% of the reading and caught 74% of the lectures. While some reported they had explored areas outside their own major (Sgan, 1969), others said they did not (Johnson, 1970; Weems et al., 1971; Bain et al., 1971; Delohery and McLaughlin, 1971; Hales, et al., 1973).

These findings could be the result of varying student characteristics at different universities. It is difficult to draw a firm conclusion, but on the whole, evidence indicates that students do not take pass-fail courses to explore other areas; rather, they use it to give themselves more time in other courses or for other things (Cromer, 1969; and Weems et al., 1971).

Achievement of students under pass-fail grading

Hellville and Stamn (1967) examined the grades of students enrolled in pass-fail courses at Knox College and found that GPA's increased directly in proportion to the number of pass-fail courses the student took and that the mean academic performance within pass-fail courses was lowered.

Conflicting results were obtained in a study done by Gold et. al., (1971) at Courtland College. They used samples of juniors and freshmen matched for GPA, SAT scores and sex. Grades were submitted for all students, although some were converted to pass - fail grades. The authors found that the mean GPA for both juniors and freshmen was significantly lower for those who took pass fail courses. The experimental subjects demonstrated no compensating improvement in the non-pass-fail courses, and even after they returned to a system of traditional grading they continued to get significantly lower grades than the control group. In this particular case, taking pass-fail courses had an adverse effect on college achievement.

Results from extensive surveys at Princeton and the University of Southern Illinois indicate that students suffer some loss in motivation in their pass-fail courses, and possibly as a result they learn less (Delohery and McLaughlin, 1971). While students who have a pass-fail option will take a few additional courses that they might otherwise have missed, a willingness to explore and try new areas is not assured by pass-fail grading.

Studies conducted by Sgan (1967) and Quann (1971) lend further support to the argument that students do not perform well under pass-fail grading. Quann reported that students at Washington State University who took either pass-fail courses or traditional courses did not differ significantly in GPA initially but after the courses were completed, the regularly enrolled students received five times as many A's and 50% more B's than pass-fail students. Sgan found that at Brandeis University, freshmen, sophomores and juniors received significantly poorer grades than they did under letter grading. There were no significant differences between seniors who take pass-fail courses and those who did not. Since first year students did most poorly, Sgan concluded that "there would seem to be some need for special preparation and attention to first year students if pass-fail is opened to them as an option." Merely allowing it, however, may not be a responsible educational effort (p. 643).

Metzner and Sharp (1971) investigated whether pass-fail options at the undergraduate level would encourage education majors to break away from previous elective choice and choose more courses in various scientific and mathematical disciplines. They concluded that the options hold little promise for developing greater scientific or mathematical sophistication among prospective teachers.

Problems with pass-fail grading.

Recent studies have highlighted some of the problems associated with pass-fail grading. While graduate and professional schools prefer applicants with transcripts showing grades, a survey conducted by Goldstein and Tilker (1969) of higher education institutions in New York State indicated that graduate schools preferred a 4-point or less grading system for their own internal purposes. Professional schools, on the other hand, preferred a 5 or more point scale. Warren (1971) and Simon (1970) claimed that grades fulfill an administrative rather than an educational purpose, but that administrative needs such as rewarding financial aid or honors are legitimate educational purposes. He said graduate and professional schools are the primary beneficiaries of grades for selection and are, therefore, the ones most concerned about departures from traditional grading patterns.

A survey conducted by the American Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admissions Officers (1971) showed that 44% of the institutions reported that they disregard the pass-fail grades of transfer students. Another 28% had not established a policy, 21% requested additional information, and 7% assigned an arbitrary quantitative value to the grades. Twenty-six per cent of the graduate schools that responded indicated that admission to their programs is either jeopardized or delayed by the presence of a substantial number of pass-fail credits. The data from this survey indicate that the effects of pass-fail grading on transfer students is unclear but that graduate school applicants experience some harmful effects.

Needham (1970) of Simons College quoted the Law School Admissions Test Council as saying, "College grades make a contribution to the predictions of law school grades that is not supplied by the Law School Admissions Test." He asked Simmons College students if they thought pass-fail grades on their transcripts had an adverse effect on their application to graduate schools, transfer application or employment applications. The number of students who perceived unfavorable reactions against their transcripts was small in all cases except for transfer students.

A survey conducted by Rossman (1970) was in accord with these findings. His sample consisted of 45 schools that were frequently attended by graduates of Macalaster College. Sixty percent of the administrators indicated that the reputation of the college would be considered in admissions decisions. Seventy-five percent indicated that achievement test scores would take on great importance for students with many pass-fail grades. He reported further that students with 75% or more of their grades in traditional formats should not experience difficulty in admissions. The results of this study indicate that students who come from schools that do not have established reputations and students who do not score well on standardized achievement tests might suffer most from pass-fail grading.

Only a small number of colleges are committed completely to a pass-fail system, and very few students graduate with more than 10% of their grades in pass-fail form (Hofeller, 1971; Warren, 1971). Indications are that most students who have a high percentage of pass-fail grades and apply to graduate schools are admitted but perhaps not always to their first choice of school. The effect on loss of fellowships or scholarships, however, has not yet been determined (Hofeller, 1971).

Phi Beta Kappa (1969) reported that about 60% of those schools that responded to their questionnaire kept their usual grades in addition to indicating whether the course was passed or failed, and about 80% ranked students in their respective classes by GPA. About 64% of the Phi Beta Kappa chapters reported no problems with pass-fail grading; another 12% indicated problems, and 24% were uncertain about problems.

A report by Bailey (1972) indicated that employers in private industry appear to be less concerned with the type of system by which a student was graded than his previous work experience record, and government employers base their hiring on government designed tests rather than grades. Acceptance to medical or law school is, however, highly determined by previous scholastic records, and professional schools such as these are not generally receptive to records with nontraditional grading symbols.

Schoemer et al. (1973) mailed a questionnaire to 288 members of the Council of Graduate Schools and received replies from 90%. Less than 1% (0.6%) indicated that undergraduate grades were of little or no importance in admissions

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decisions. In general, data indicate that moderate percentages of nontraditional grades--less than 10%--are of little hindrance to a student's chances for admission to graduate school. Once a student records 10% or more of nontraditional grades, his chances for admission and financial support are jeopardized. In no cases were significant differences found between public and private institutions nor between graduate schools of different sizes. The data indicated that deans of graduate schools appear to be uneasy about nontraditional grades, but they do, perhaps begrudgingly, accept with no penalty moderate numbers of nontraditional grades.

Suggested solutions

Some solutions to the problems created by changing to nontraditional grading systems have been suggested. One method of dealing with pass-fail grading was described by Tragesser et al. (1968). He suggested that "College Level Examinations" that measure achievement in specific course areas might be used when transferring credits is a problem. The University of California at Santa Cruz and Raymond College, both of which normally assign pass-fail grades, provide letter grades in science courses for premedical students at their own request. Goddard College and Nasson College issue "descriptive analyses of course work for transferring students."

The Department of Vocational Teacher Education at the University of Massachusetts, whose students spend 50% of their time on non-course experiences, uses a method of written evaluation to record individual student progress when the traditional grading is not feasible (Johnson and Lauraesch, 1969). Leiseming et al. (1970) described another alternative. At Westminister College, where a 4-point grading system was adopted in 1965, academic progress is assessed by comparing hours earned each semester with a norm of 15.5 hours. No GPA is obtained but students are ranked by this method.

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Massey et al. (1969) described a method used at Ohio Northern University for determining such things as dean's list, eligibility for honor societies, graduate honors, and class rank. At this university one-third of a student's work goes ungraded, and GPA's are based only on graded courses. Instructors fill out separate honors recommendations that are used only for internal decision making and are not part of the student's permanent record. A similar method is used at Tarkio College (Aven and Breazier, 1969) where student teaching grades are pass-fail. The student's supervisor writes an evaluation that becomes part of the student's academic credentials. Of the school superintendents who receive these written evaluations, 81% said that they were sufficient. These students receive letter grades on other courses.

For schools on a total pass-fail program, possibly the most practical solution is to keep a dual record of grades so that traditional transcripts are available on student request. (Tragesser et al., 1968) Another possibility is to include descriptive summaries of course work in the student's academic record (Aven et al., 1969). There is no need to resort to either of these procedures, however, if only a limited pass-fail option exists.

A suggestion made by Reiner and Jung (1972) is to use Pass, Honors and No Credit as terms for evaluation, thus offering incentive for superior work and doing away with the stigma of failure on a student's record.

Pascal (1972) believes that pass-fail experiments must be based on a model that constitutes a departure from traditional learning and teaching. He describes a programmed learning model with which pass-fail grading could be replaced by a pass-incomplete system of evaluations.

The National College of Education, Evanston, Illinois, abandoned the traditional American grading system because the faculty considered it to be detrimental to, rather than supportive of, the goals of their curriculum (Troyer, 1970). The new system was grounded on the premise that all students, as unique individuals, can develop adequacy in a field of study if given proper instruction and the necessary time. When performance goals were met, completed courses were listed on the student's official transcript.

While pass-fail is the more prominent trend in new grading techniques, the credit/no-credit option, with complete elimination of the concept of "failure," is the emerging pattern (Quann, 1970). Reiner (1971) suggests a number of proposals for change made by other writers. Quann, discussing grading trends, said, "It is difficult to determine whether they (nontraditional systems) are intended as a panacea to cure the ills of traditional grading or a placebo to placate restive students and faculty." There is no evidence that traditional grades are better predictors of future academic success than are nonconventional grades (Faust, 1971).

Thorndike (1969) warns prospective innovators that grading practices are deeply embedded in the total institutional culture. He wrote:

> The culture may be an imperfect and irrational one, and the current grading behavior of faculty members may lack psychometric elegance and be in some respects erratic and even capricious. But a modus vivendi has typically been worked out between the traditions of marking and the rest of institutional culture. It is partly for this reason that faculty grading practices are so resistant to change. One who would reform the marking system of an educational institution needs first to acquire a profound understanding of the culture of that institution.

Sgan (1970) postulates that a shift in emphasis from the nature of the student to the nature of the discipline might well be in order. He pointed out that Kelly and Thompson (1967) recommended that courses in structural, systematic disciplines (mathematics, physical science and some social sciences) utilize only pass-fail; that courses interweaving knowledge and practical skills that may be tested for actual perfection (the professions and the performing arts) utilize both pass-fail and letter grades; and courses in conjectural and modal disciplines (humanities and some social sciences) use only letter grades.

Whatever changes in a grading scheme are adopted, they should not be considered in isolation. Grading policy is an integral part of a total academic program. It should reflect the philosophy of the institution and not be concerned merely as a form of educational mechanics (Johnson, 1970).

Conclusions

This cursory review of the literature on pass-fail grading leads to the following conclusions:

1. Evaluation of college and university students is legitimate and necessary for a number of reasons (Reiner, 1972; Raimi, 1967; Trow, 1968).
2. Grades and marks in a variety of forms presently are the major devices used for evaluations (Miller, 1966; Academic Senate, Berkeley, 1966; Hoyt, 1970).
3. Pass-fail and similar grading systems, widely adopted since 1965, appear to be popular modifications of traditional systems (Warren, 1971; Quann, 1970; Editors of *Education U.S.A.*, 1972; Sgan 1969; Karlins *et al.*, 1969; Cromer, 1969; Bailey 1972; OIR at Washington University, 1970; Hewitt, 1967).
4. Students do not take pass-fail courses in order to avoid evaluations, but once having taken them, their performance in both those courses and in traditionally graded courses declines (Sgan 1970; Gold *et al.*, 1971; Quann, 1971).
5. Students do not take pass-fail courses to explore work outside of their own major, but rather do so to lighten the course-work burden (Davidovicz, 1972; Johnson, 1970; Weems *et al.*, 1971).

6. Freshmen suffer most academically from taking pass-fail grades and so they should not be permitted the option or they should receive special guidance when they elect to do so (Quann, 1971).

7. Students using the pass-fail option report a reduction in the amount of tension they perceive (Davidovicz, 1972; Stallings and Leslie, 1970; Hales et al., 1973; Bailey, 1972).

8. Students do not usually perform as well under pass-fail grading. Interest in the subject matter is diminished. (Quann, 1971; Sgan, 1970; Powell, 1970; Johansson et al., 1971).

9. The elimination of failing grades from transcripts is being practiced more widely than previously (Simpson et al., 1970).

10. Most schools do not have major problems with pass-fail grading because they offer it only as a limited option (Needham, 1970).

11. While students with a substantial number of credits in pass-fail courses can transfer to other colleges or be admitted to graduate and professional schools, they are less likely to get into the school of their choice and chances to get financial aid are jeopardized (Schoemer, et al., 1973; Needham, 1970; Rossman, 1970; AACRAO, 1971; Hassler, 1969).

12. When students with many pass-fail grades apply to graduate or professional schools, the schools tend to give more weight to scores on achievement tests (Rossman, 1970).

13. Double bookkeeping systems or written evaluations can serve to supplement transcripts of students who have a large percentage of pass-fail courses (Tragesser et al., 1968; Aven et al., 1969; Johnson et al., 1969; Massey, et al., 1969; Johnson, 1970).

14. Institutions are not yet doing the necessary research or using adequate

al., 1971; Davidovicz, 1972; Stallings, et al., 1968).

15. Research on the success or the failure of the pass-fail option is still inconclusive. It is clear, however, that something is wrong with the traditional grading systems--not because evaluation attempts are invalid, but because grading systems in particular, as evaluation attempts, appear to be invalid. Other than the clear suggestion that grades act as motivators, it appears that grades serve no valid educational function and that they may do a great deal of harm when serving convenient administrative functions (Reiner, 1972; Davidovicz, 1972).

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